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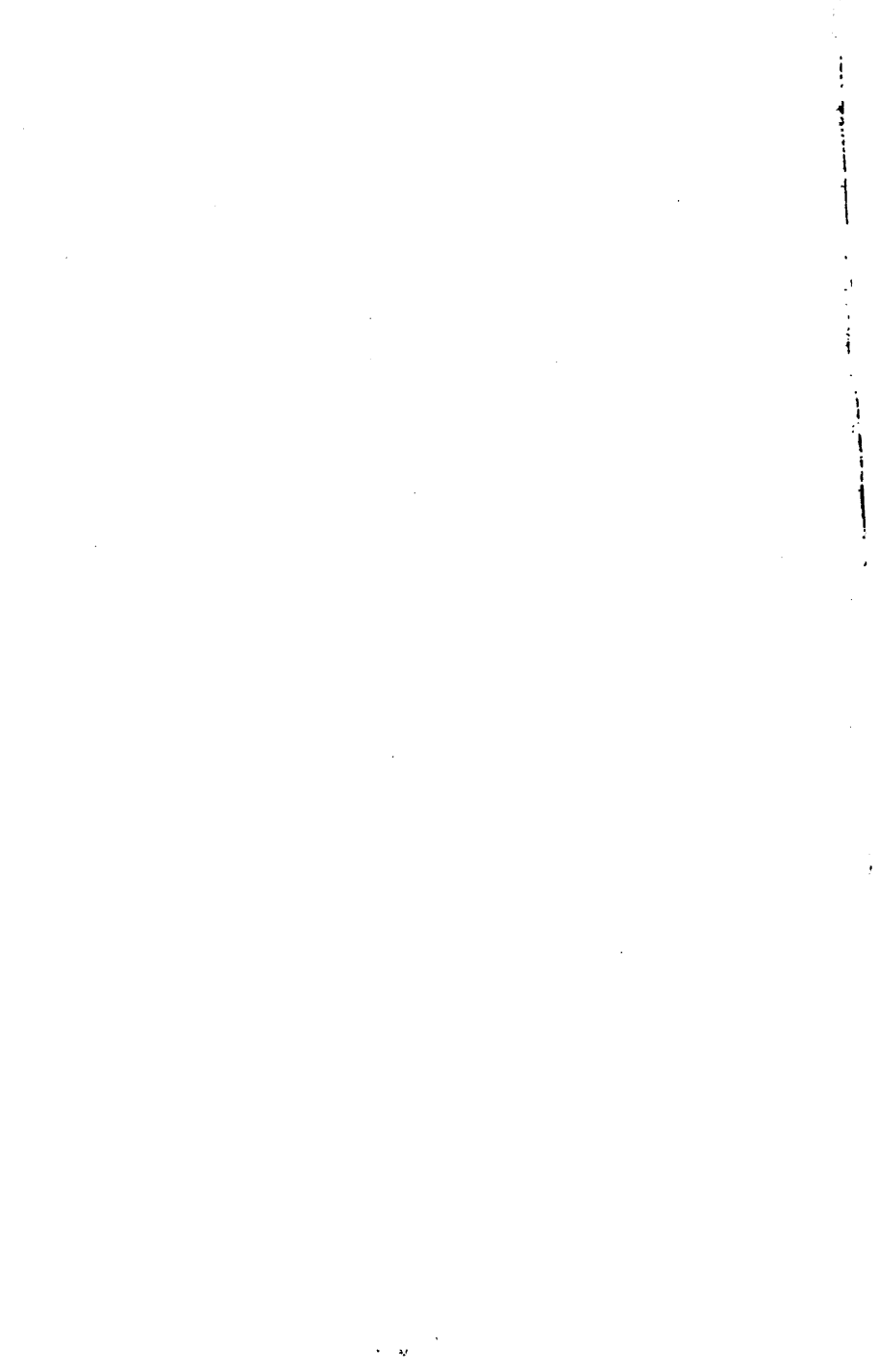


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FURTH IN FIELD



FURTH IN FIELD

A VOLUME OF ESSAYS ON THE LIFE
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
OF OLD SCOTLAND

BY HUGH HALIBURTON

AUTHOR OF "HORACE IN HOMESPUN," ETC.

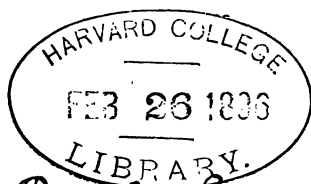
*pseudonym for
James Logan Robertson*



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**THIS BOOK
OF SCOTTISH ESSAYS**

IS INSCRIBED

BY

HUGH HALIBURTON

TO HIS FRIEND

THE REV. DR JOHN MAIR

IN MEMORY OF

A DAY AT SOUTHDEAN



CONTENTS.

PART I.

OF FUN AND FEASTING.

	PAGE
THE BEAR BARREL	3
FOYS	16
HOGMANAY	23
HANSEL MONDAY	31
ST VALENTINE'S DAY	36
ALL FOOLS' DAY	43
THE KING'S BIRTHDAY	50
THE SUMMER EXCURSION	57

PART II.

OF OLD WORDS AND FORGOTTEN WAYS.

POACHERS AND POACHING	69
THE NORTH SEA SCHEME	92
CONCERNING SKINK	100
THE LOTMAN	104
THE WENE IN THE WAIKE (<i>in Hogg's "Kilmeny"</i>)	111
A FORGOTTEN ROAD AND A FAMOUS VIEW	116
ON PENTLAND'S EDGE	125

PART III.

OF LOCHLEVEN AND THE LANDS
ABOUT IT.

	PAGE
"GAY" KINROSS	133
LOCHLEVEN AND THE BISHOPSHIRE	140
FISH AND FISHING AT LOCHLEVEN	148
THE BOOKS OF LOCHLEVEN	154

PART IV.

OF THE POET OF THE SEASONS.

PORTRAIT OF JAMES THOMSON	167
THE LAND OF THOMSON	175
EDNAM AND THE THOMSONS	181
A FORSAKEN SCOTTISH SHRINE	188
THOMSON AT SOUTHDEAN	196

PART V.

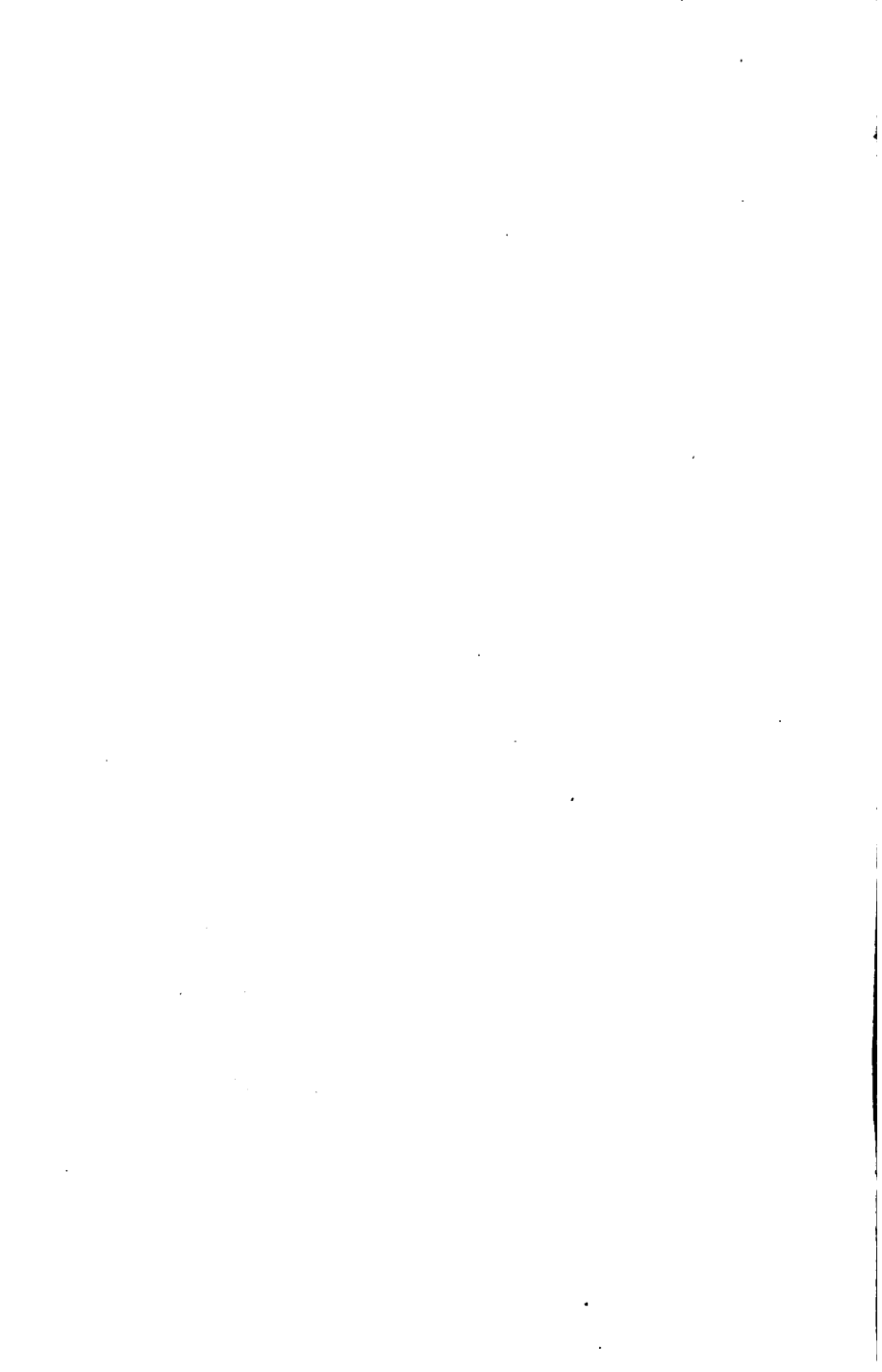
OF BURNS IN A NEW ASPECT.

BURNS THE POET OF THE COUNTRY	217
BURNS'S SCHOOL READING-BOOK	225
BURNS AND GOLDSMITH	232
BURNS AND YOUNG	244
BURNS AND SHENSTONE	253
BURNS AND BLAIR	263
DUNBAR IN BURNS	272

PART I.



OF FUN AND FEASTING.



THE BEAR BARREL.

"O gie me the times when auld ploys were in vogue,
An' the cake an' the kebbuck gaed down wi' the cogue!"

Hew Ainslie.

THE ancient hamely fare of the Scottish peasant has undergone a change within the last two or three generations. The halesome parritch is still, indeed, the chief of Scotia's food, though to a less extent than it was when Burns proclaimed its praise. Toasted cakes of oatmeal are, however—the more's the pity—perceptibly rarer even in farm kitchens than they were wont to be, while girdle cakes are practically unknown. To many people, whose immediate forefathers were possibly reared upon them, the distinction between those varieties of cake is probably only speculative. But while oatmeal has been declining somewhat in popular favour among our rustics, barley-meal may be said to have gone out of use altogether. The souple scone, the wale o' food, is merely a memory. It is almost necessary to say nowadays to an unenlightened public that it was a creation of barley-meal. John Barleycorn is still, no doubt, the king of grain on hundreds of Scottish farms. His tribute to the Scottish kail-pot, not yet entirely transmuted into that soft and fushionless

concession to enfeebled digestions, rice, still tumbles in a rollicking dance with beef and greens in "the boiling flood;" but the barley bannock, at which our brave forbears took many a whang, and on which, as auld sangs asseverate, they upheld the national independence, has been for some time ungenerously banished from the bill of rural fare. It has no longer an honoured place on Highland dresser or in Lowland aumrie. What was once good feeding for the old Scots nobility is now scornfully rejected by the Scottish crofter and cottar—except, perhaps, in inaccessible regions of Perthshire and Aberdeenshire. The ploughman's palate despises what the aristocratic throat took down with a relish—for how goes the auld Scots sonnet of John, Duke of Argyll?—

"At the sight of Dumbarton once again
I'll cock up my bonnet and march amain,
With a gude claymore hanging down at my heel,
To whang at the bannocks o' barley meal."

Did our swank country lads know how appetisingly sustaining a barley scone can be made—especially did our comely country lasses, our rustic Helens and Hebes, realise the virtues, of beauty to the skin and sweetness to the temper, which reside in bannocks of bear-meal—there would be, I am firmly convinced, such a revival of this well-approved ancient feeding-stuff as would send down the price of wheat, and drive tapioca and similar foreign skinking ware that jaups in luggies clean out of caup and market. It is only now and again, at rare intervals, that some patriotic and patriarchal

bonnet-laird, earthfast on his own acres, takes a greening for the barley piece which consoled his youth, and orders a melder of bear to the mill for his individual consumption, starting off with a baking of half a firloot. But for these intermittent and, alas! ineffectual plunges into the cookery of a remote past, the memory even of the barley bannock would be lost to the whole countryside.

It was not, however, for his benefactions to broth-pot and bake-board that John Barleycorn got title to rank as King of Grain. It was for the gift of his strong heart's blood. There truly he still "shines chief," whether in the etherealised spirit that has jinked through wimpling worms to the glass, or in the rich brown browst that reams owre the brink of the jug in glorious foam. It was for this aspect of John Barleycorn that Burns sang in laudation of the juice Scots bear can mak' us—gude auld Scots drink. And justification of the bard's jubilation is not far to seek; for of the four elements necessary, in his own estimation, to his earthly felicity, John Barleycorn furnished two. Rowth of rhyme was, of course, essential; but scarcely one whit less indispensable were a scone and whisky gill—both of them, there needs no telling, gifts of the bold son of Ceres. A pair of breeks, thrown in adventitiously—a haill pair for preference—completed the condition of the poet's dream of happiness. It is the capabilities of John Barleycorn in this double aspect of him, the scone-and-gill aspect, that gives him his pre-eminence over the kindred grain. But it is easy to multiply the beneficial aspects of John Barleycorn

—it is easy to see double on such a theme. “An’ ye wanted fire and meat and claes, and were deeing o’ cauld, and had a sair heart—whilk is warst o’ a’—wi’ just tippence in your pouch, wadna ye be glad to buy a dram wi’t, to be eilding and claes and a supper, and heart’s ease into the bargain, till the morn’s morning?” It is the testimony of Scott, and the argument of Maggie Mucklebackit. But for sober purposes the twin aspect of the subject need only be insisted upon at present. And in the history of John Barleycorn’s ministrations to man, the solid and substantial scone, there is hardly a doubt, came first. But the flowing gill also is of a high antiquity, and seems destined to outlast the scone. At all events, it is for liquid rather than for solid uses that a greater breadth of Scottish farmlands than at any time in past Augusts waved with “mixing” barley, is waving “all fading green and yellow” with it to-day. From the Lothians in the south to the scarcely inferior barley soils of Moray in the north, the great mass of the bear harvest is destined for distillation and brewing, and only an insignificant proportion will find its way to the mill. The flower of it goes to the brewer; the distiller gets the inferior quality; but even when barley-bread was a staple food in the farm towns and burgh towns of Scotland, it was still the lighter qualities of both bigg and barley that were dressed or ground at the mill for pot and girdle.

Before the glory of the old harvest-field disappeared, on the advent of the mechanical reaper, a special distinction was given to the barley harvest over that of

other grain. The festival of Harvest Home, otherwise known as the Maiden, or the Kirn, though unhappily dying out, is at least known by repute to every one. But only few can now remember that, before the grand concluding festival of the autumn season came round, a kind of snack or foretaste of its ampler fun was the custom, now grown obsolete, on nearly every farm. It marked the stooking, that is the gathering into stooks, of the barley harvest; and the celebration of that event was known as "The Bear Barrel." In respect of name it might be regarded as a set-off to the Kirn festival. Each of those autumnal merry-makings was named from the part played at their celebration by the contents proper to these vessels—whisky (not beer, as might be imagined) in the one case, and cream in the other. The ambrosial composition called "cream-crowdie" was originally, and still is—where the festival is correctly observed—an essential part of the great banquet of the Kirn. In comparison with the Kirn, the celebration of which was preceded by elaborate preparations, and accompanied by gargantuan eating and drinking, and quite a programme of pastimes, the ploy of the Bear Barrel was simplicity itself. The barley crop, as even towns' bodies know, ripens soonest, and is generally taken in Scotland in the end of August or the beginning of September. While it was being gathered, in an earlier generation, by the old-fashioned hook into sheaves, and the sheaves fastened by bandsters and "stood" up into stooks to dry and harden, the oats—and wheat; where wheat was grown—were qualifying for the sickle in their turn; and it usually happened that just when

the barley maiden was taken—that is, when the last handful of ripe barley on the farm was shorn—the reapers, without any cessation of field work, could go forward to the wheat and oats. It would sometimes occur that a little of the latter was taken before the barley harvest was quite finished ; on the other hand, there might be an occasional lie day or two, rarely amounting to a week, but according to the character of the particular season and the state of the weather, during which period the harvesters would have to wait till the remaining corn was matured. But whenever it happened that the barley was all cut down on the farm, whether the oats were already touched or still grew in their green virginity, the event was marked in the evening by the little Maiden of the Bear Barrel. When the day's work was done and supper was over, just as it all went on upon ordinary harvest days, signs of something extraordinary began to show themselves both in the roomy barn, where the fee'd harvesters—weavers of both sexes, for the most part, from the nearest village—were accommodated, and in the scarcely less roomy farm kitchen, where the entertainment was to be held. In the barn, or at the barndoor, if the air was tranquil, the members of the bandwin or bandwins (a bandwin included two men and four women shearers) began towards gloaming to pay a little unusual attention to dress, and to personal appearance generally ; the men performed ablutions, handled a comb, perhaps a razor ; tied round bare, sun-scorched craigs, with more or less grace and comfort, a woollen scarf of faded tartan or other check ; made gallantry to the girls, and perhaps opened a communication through

the herd with the harvesters on the adjacent farm. The women, who always made themselves tidy of an evening, seemed on their part in gayer spirits at the prospect of a ploy, and perhaps added a brighter snood or head riband than usual to the adornment of their hair. Meanwhile, in the farm kitchen the keg of whisky—the caggie, as it was endearingly called—containing a matter of some three or four gallons, was solemnly introduced, or rather inducted, and the farmer presently appeared, with the gravity of an officiating elder, in the ha' doorway, and briefly demanded in a stoor voice, directed at the barn, "whether they werena coming to taste the Bear Barrel." This was understood to be a pressing invitation, as indeed it was meant to be; and it was accepted for the most part with such an air of gloomy indifference, or reluctant obedience, as a rustic thinks it necessary to assume when approaching the House of God on a Sunday. They sauntered singly or in silent knots across the yard with a ridiculous air of decorum—unless some frisky young fellow, the wag of the party, probably a tailor by trade, cut a caper to make the maids giggle, or inquired in a loud whisper of some douce Jeanie Deans among the young women "whether she had mindit to bring her Bible and a peppermint?"

As likely as not, more especially on hill farms, the whisky was a home product or smuggled manufacture, and at the time referred to—a few generations ago—did not in any case stand the farmer in more than twopence a gill of three glasses. As much as an English pint, consumed in the course of the evening,

a glass at a time, was the average allowance to each harvester's mouth, male or female, at the fête of the Bear Barrel. It was held to be a sufficiently sober splore at that. Exceptions there were, of course, to the moderation of this allowance; some drouthy carle of a bandster, for example, might prefer his share in a caup or luggie, declaring that his mouth held just a gill, and that a less measure only gave his tongue "the smell o't;" while, on the other hand, a modest bit lassie at her first hairst would be content to cough at a thimbleful. Unstinted bread and cheese or butter (not both—those who united butter and cheese were counted menseless) lay to hand on the kitchen table, but the entertainment was distinctly a liquid one; it was in no sense a supper. The tups' heads and trotters, the links of puddings black and white, the sides of mutton, or chines of beef, and all the rest of it, which supported the long revelry of the Kirn, were out of place at the modest carousal of the Caggie. And here, by the way, the reader of this paper, who may be interested in the antiquities of Scottish social customs, might be referred to an incidental account by Sir Walter Scott of the festivities at a harvest home on Tweedside three and a half centuries ago. The scene is laid at the Tower of Glendearg, and the account will be found in the thirteenth chapter of *The Monastery*. But to come back to the Bear Barrel and the youth-time of the nineteenth century. The invited reapers stepped into the glow of the kitchen awkwardly, bashfully, almost apologetically, as if the expected entertainment was hardly to be taken seriously. They caught the eye of the farmer, stand-

ing like a Colossus on his own floor-head, as they entered, and fell with him into a discourse on the evening's weather, shaping their remarks to meet the wishes of their employer and entertainer. There was of course some talk on the excellence of the barley, and the farmer was sure to be complimented on the fineness of his crop, both head and stalk o't. He would probably acknowledge the compliment by treating himself incontinently to a huge pinch of snuff, and sending his mull on a coasting voyage round the apartment. It was still the age of rappee, pipe tobacco being as yet left to tinkers and other gan-gerels. The men folk hung about the floor, while the women gathered into knots on long forms at the wall. Presently the tap was turned, and the Master of the Harvest ran off a glass, held it up, making the while critical grimaces with one side of his face at the yellowish liquid, pree'd it deliberately, smacked his lips twice amid the universal hush, and pronounced it gude. The next glass he dedicated at a throw to the health of the company. Then came the harvesters' turn. They toasted their entertainer and each other in an informal way ; the wag, who was also the buck of the party, winked his regards to the girls, and pretended to be suffocated at each sip ; the character of the whisky was favourably commented on, as if it were the newly manufactured juice of the barley they had just been praising. One, perhaps, to uphold his credit as a connoisseur of whisky, reserved his judgment, though frequently appealed to, till a late hour in the evening, when curiosity was no longer excited, and had then the hardihood to declare that he had

tasted a better brew. But the farmer was generally a match for such impertinences, and, in a case like the one supposed, would be kittle to retort with the coarse but conclusive proverb—"Ay, ay, Tammy, ma man! as the soo fills, the draff spills!" By and by, under the influence of John Barleycorn, the wheels of life, as the poet says, began to scrieve along wi' rattlin' glee. Strangers from the neighbouring toun, aware of the night's frolic, peeped in blately at the open door, were made welcome, and added their news and their nonsense to the bustle that now filled the wide kitchen. Every tongue was going, and the conversation, which had first spread out from the more particular occasion of the gathering into channels of general interest, was now racing along in twenty different courses, here noisily and argumentatively, there jocosely and banteringly, and yonder sweetly and smoothly with whispered favours "secret and precious." Some one at last calling out that the night was wearing, the cry for a song or a dance was raised—just one. Where concertinas are now plentiful, the fiddle was not rare in those days; if the fiddle failed, probably a bag-piping shepherd in his hut on the braes was to be had for the hazard of rousing him. Failing both windbag and catgut, there was the diddler. Anybody could diddle who had good lungs and a sense of rhythm. But the man or woman who had the reputation of being good at diddling was at once called for with a voice there was no denying. It was an accomplishment so much in demand at the daft days, and at other convivial seasons, that we have known a woman-servant who, in enumerating the list of her qualifica-

tions for farmhouse service, crowned the catalogue by intimating that she was "a grand diddler." She was engaged off-hand. The diddler, then, whether man or woman, was put into a corner, and the dancers took the floor. A veteran diddler dashed courageously into his duty. Following or falling into a tune, he opened his mouth, and sang or said, to the beat of his foot on the kitchen tiles, "Diddle-diddle, diddle-diddle," and kept on singing or saying, "Diddle-diddle, diddle-diddle," with little variety of tone, but without a pause, and with due attention to time, till he was black in the face, and his tongue was as dry as a parrot's. He required frequent slockening—that is, a drink at the end of every dance; and if that was not reward enough, he had the appreciation of the dancers, and the proud consciousness of controlling a principal part of the evening's amusement. After the one dance and a circulation of drinks, a song—only one—was probably called for. Burns's ballad of the life and death of John Barleycorn was often given, as appropriate to the occasion of the Bear Barrel; but each district had its favourite songs, which were certain to be demanded and given, whatever the occasion of the social gathering might be. A great favourite in Strathmore farms at one time was the Forfar Pensioner. I have never seen it in print, and it is too long to give here; but whether from youthful associations or intrinsic merit, it will remain in my memory when many a more popular rhyme has been forgotten. It is a sort of rustic Odyssey, recounting, in the first person, the adventures of a Forfar lad who enlisted in the time of the Napoleonic wars, and fought in the Peninsula:—

"We maiched thro' mony a market place,
An' wandered up an' down, sir ;
My coat was covered owre wi' lace,
An' powdered was my crown, sir."

But marching orders of a different kind were issued,
and he was "ca'd owre to Spain"—

"Where fifty regiments in a raw
Cam' mairchin' owre the plain, sir."

The night before his first encounter with the French
was a sleepless one to him—

"Dreary thochts cam' in my mind
O' Farfar an' my daddie."

It made his heart beat when the French came on pell-
mell, but—

"Farfar bluid was ever true,
Sae I did not retreat, sir."

A ball struck him, but he loaded and fired again.
At last

"The bluid cam' bockin' thro' my hose,
I could nae langer stand, sir,
I flang my gun amang my foes,
An' sat me doon an' sang, sir
'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,'
Syne 'Up wi' Maggie Dick,' sir ;
My wounded leg grew unco sair,
An' stiff as ony stick, sir."

He came home with the help of an oxter staff, and
lived snugly on his well-earned pension. Scarcely
less popular was the amatory song of a ploughman lad
from Stirling braes, whose vagaries in drink had rare
power of diverting the rustic mind. Even the English
song of the Derbyshire clown was a prime favourite
among the farms and bothies of Strathearn. Its action

chorus of beating a drum was not its least attraction. It began in some such way as this—

“A sturdy clown from Derbyshire,
Fed up on mirth and loyaltee,
With his sturdy legs and his shoulders broad,
But as ignorant as a child could be ;
He went to a sergeant recruiting there,
With a broad red sash about his waist,
‘Come, tip me your fist, for I mean to list,
And I hope you will speak and get me placed !’
With a row-dow-dow,” etc.

Dance or song, one led to another—the dance, as giving active employment to most, or even to all, predominating ; whisky was shed like water, till the kitchen smelled like a change-house at a Holy Fair celebration ; and when ten o’clock struck through the revelry, it was recognised at once that the Bear Barrel for the year was over. Duty required that the harvesters should be astir next morning at five ; there was no allowance made for late hours at a Bear Barrel merrymaking ; it was a mere episode, which was suffered in no way to retard the operations or dislocate the arrangements of the precious harvest season. The mirth was hearty for the two or three hours it lasted, and strangers from the neighbouring farm were welcome to a taste of the liquor and a share of the mirth. But there was no attempt to abuse the farmer’s hospitality or demoralise the farm-town. In a few minutes after ten everybody was either fast asleep or falling over—those in the latter condition perhaps with the half-formed wish that the morning might be wet, so as to secure a long “lie” for limbs doubly tired with the toils of the hairst field and the festivities of the Bear Barrel.

ABOUT FOYS.

HUNDREDS of foyes are held on hundreds of farms north of the Forth on the night of the 21st of November, the evening preceding the great service term of Martinmas. The society of rustic labourers is then on the eve of a great change. There is to be a rearrangement of its units which the next four-and-twenty hours will effect. And, meanwhile, the occasion is seized of parting company with the old arrangement and bidding it formally farewell. The custom—a time-honoured one—though no longer retaining its ancient vigour, is still far from destitute of vitality. To a town-dweller the name and the nature of the institution will scarcely now be known.* Briefly described, a foy is a farewell entertainment given to former associates by the person or persons leaving. It is of rural growth, and is in an especial sense a ploughman's institution. It originated, doubtless, in the shifting nature of his employment. Fee'd by the year, the young ploughman at the end of his

* "If you're my friend, meet me this evening at the Rummer. I'll pay my *foy*, drink a health to my king, prosperity to my country, and away for Hungary to-morrow morning."—FARQUHAR'S *Constant Couple*, Act i. sc. 1. The word is French—*foi*, faith. Leigh Hunt's edition of Farquhar gives '*way*'—a misinterpretation.

term longs for change of scene ; the monotony of life oppresses him ; he is eminently social, and has little outlet for his social instincts ; he seeks service on another farm, but not till he has taken kindly leave of his last year's companions on the farm he is quitting. He is besides in a position, pecuniarily, to give the leave-taking entertainment : his year's money is (or rather *was*—*tempora mutantur !*) paid down to him at the end of his service in a solid and unbroken sum.

Though primarily a ploughman's institution, it is not confined to farm servants. It is occasionally observed by gardeners, hedgers, and foresters, on the occasion of their leaving one district for another. There used also to be 'prentice foys in the homes of blacksmiths, wheelwrights, and such-like country craftsmen. Tam or Wull had "served oot his time ;" he was now "getting up his indenture," preparatory to starting for himself as a free journeyman. In his case the master, to whom he had been bound from boyhood, provided the entertainment ; and reasonably. He had made considerable profit by his apprentice, especially during the last two years or so. The system of apprenticeship by indenture is now pretty rare. It was a legal bond by which the master undertook to instruct his apprentice in the methods and mysteries of his handicraft, the apprentice on his part undertaking to make out and conclude the period of his apprenticeship. The length of apprenticeship varied, according to the nature of the craft, from four to seven years. Each party provided caution to the amount of from £10 to £20 that he would fulfil

his part of the contract. The cost of the stamped indenture, thirty shillings or so, was borne mutually. His indenture saved a wayward apprentice from the grasp of the recruiting officer, but only while it ran. If he had imprudently taken the shilling at some market or merry-making, he was liable in military service as soon as his term of apprenticeship was up. The lifted indenture, of course, relieved both master and apprentice; their mutual agreement was satisfactorily concluded, and they were in a position to appreciate the simple festivity of the foy.

Partaking of the nature of the foy were certain old drinking customs that used to be known to the various "trades" by whom they were practised, as the "foondin' pint," "the bindin' spree," "the spreadin' drink," etc. They speak to the sociality of the old days no doubt; but they look to us terribly like ingenious excuses for a dram.

To return to the foy proper—the ploughman's foy. It is, and it was, long looked forward to as an agreeable break in the monotony of social life in the country. It used to rank with *waddin's* and *maidens*—that is, penny weddings and harvest homes. It was the epilogue of field service. There was a prologue, too, "the welcome hame," which was usually given "an eight days" or so after the arrival of new ploughmen. As the name indicates, the expense of the welcome hame was borne, or supposed to be borne, by the "remaining" ploughmen—those, namely, who took service on the same farm for another year; but as a matter of fact, each man at a welcome hame, new comer and old hand, bore his own share of the

expense of the simple entertainment. It was by means like this that ploughmen got to be acquainted with each other on adjoining farms. Markets were another means of drawing them socially together. They are a social people, ready at all times and places to introduce themselves to each other, and quick to recommend their several acquaintances. Sometimes, but rarely, it would happen that a welcome hame would be diversified by a quarrel or a fight. Some vain or cantankerous ploughman would only settle into what was called "good neighbourhood" after he had endured one or two "good lickings." Good neighbourhood was always achieved by Hansel Monday at latest; but there might intervene between Martinmas and that day the social diversion of a more or less bloody *tulzie*.

The great foy time, as we have said, was and is at Martinmas. This is the great "flitting" term in the rural districts north of the Forth. It is not so in the south country, whatever it may have been; Laidlaw, it is to be remembered, represents Lucy in the ever-popular ballad as flitting at Martinmas—

"'Twas when the wan leaf frae the birk-tree was fa'in'
 An' Martinmas dowie had wound up the year,
 That Lucy row'd up her wee kist wi' her a' in,
 And left her auld maister an' neibours sae dear."

And Laidlaw was a south-country man; but it does not follow that the scene of Lucy's "flittin'" was the south country. We have heard south-country people express their strong disapproval of a custom which made "flitting" imperative at a time of the year when only wet or broken weather, with all its inconveniences,

could be expected. North-country people, again, regard their southern friends as singularly unfortunate in having to remove to new quarters at Whitsunday. What advantage, they ask, can any one have in a kailyard that cannot be delved and planted till the end of May? "Ilka land," says the old proverb, "has its ain laugh and its ain law."

It depends a good deal on the departing ploughman's character, or rather disposition, whether his foy at Martinmas is big or little. His comrades like a social fellow, who has no meanness or treachery with him. Burns's estimate was the ploughman's estimate of a man :—

"The social, friendly, honest man,
Whae'er he be,
'Tis he fulfils great Nature's plan,
And none but he."

As many as eight or nine men, with as many of the maid-servants additional, may take part in a Martinmas foy. The entertainment could not begin till the horses on the farm were "suppered"; but beginning at nine P.M., a late hour for a ploughman, it might go on till one or two next morning. Before 1853 the foy was usually held in some neighbouring alehouse; if held there after the Forbes Mackenzie Act came into operation, adjournment would be made at eleven to some neighbour cottar or ploughman's. Not seldom the farm foreman's house was the scene of the foy. The entertainment was of the simplest—whisky diluted with "sma' ale," and the never-failing fare of the country, "cheese and bread." There was plenty of talk. It would begin with the new place Jocky was

going to, include a description of the pair of horses he was to have in charge, and speculate as to the names and nature of his new neighbours. He might be entrusted with messages to this or that person supposed to be residing in the locality to which he was going—verbal letters of introduction recommending himself. Songs would be sung—ploughmen's songs: such as creep along the country-side and escape collection; sometimes, not often, one of Burns's. Burns's songs were well known, and required good style in the singer to make them acceptable; whereas a new song or ballad might be indifferently rendered—its interest was largely its novelty. They would dance, as the night wore on—mostly to their own rough and ready music. A ploughman with a little whisky in his pulse needed little invitation to the dance. Foursome reels were the favourite dance. Occasionally they would order their steps to the rhythm of the bagpipe, played by some Highland shepherd or ploughman. Towards the close of the foy, tenderness would begin to manifest itself, and a great deal would be said and done in the strictest confidence. A "greetin' match," as Jocky took farewell of Jenny in the midst of their friends, was not uncommon. Sometimes not love, but friendship, was the *motif*. And often tears were shed at parting with a favourite horse. It might be, "Man! a'm vexed at pairtin' wi' yon Bob horse!" Bob, it is to be explained, was a willing worker associated with a lazy mate. He would enlarge on what Bob could do at "leading" time—how many thraves of wheat he could lead at one rake, and never turn a hair! There

were few presents interchanged, none costly, at the parting scenes. A comrade might present Jocky with a "snuff-pen ;" or Meg or Jenny might extend the gift of a riband—red, or green, or black—for Jocky's watch.

Next morning about eight o'clock Jocky got away, if he was on terms of good agreement with his master. If not, he might be kept at his work till noon. He was in high spirits ; his year's fee was in his pocket. The ploughman was counted weirdless who broke on his fee while it was in his master's hands. A "single" ploughman had only two items of luggage—his kist and his meal-stand. The latter was a padlocked barrel for his oatmeal. These he would commission the carrier to call for and convey to his new bothy. Or, if he were removing only a few miles away, he would himself fetch them in the evening with the help of his new horse. His departure was quietly taken at last. Sometimes two or three ploughmen, all leaving together, would go in company for a mile or twain, separating where their common road divided, or at the quiet four-ways, each to his own destination at some distant farm. Years might elapse till chance brought them together again.

HOGMANAY.

THE customary observances at Hallowe'en, remarks Carlyle, passed and re-passed in rude awe and laughter from the times of the Druids without receiving poetical commemoration till the genius of Burns once and for all appropriated the interesting subject. A theme of equal interest and as ancient and mysterious an origin remains unutilised to this day in the usages and ceremonies proper to Hogmanay. This hoary institution, with which the nation has not yet quite broken, was celebrated, as every Scot even in this revolutionary nineteenth century knows, on the last day of the dying year. This used to be a day, more especially in rural Scotland, of extreme sociality among friends and "auld acquaintance," and of profuse, if somewhat rough and ready, hospitality even to the stranger poor. Every house of any pretension to prosperity and respectability made the chance-comer welcome to food and drink. The feeling of brotherhood seemed to be general. The rich and the well-to-do seemed on that day to make haste to entertain their less fortunate brothers of mankind—in many instances they would let them go only after loading them with gifts. The respectable poor, on the other hand, laid aside for the day their honest pride, that would not let them

beg, and accepted that entertainment and those gifts in the spirit in which they were offered. The cause of this prevalent generosity of feeling, affecting all classes, has long been matter of discussion, in which, as was perhaps inevitable, the name of the institution figured prominently. They find, for example, in "Hogmanay" a corruption of the French words "Homme est né," and account for the public rejoicings by a reference to the nativity of Christ. It is supposed to be no bar to this interpretation of the institution and name of Hogmanay that the traditional anniversary of the birth of our Lord is the 25th and not the 31st of December. "Many superstitious ideas and rites pertaining to Yule," says old Dr Jamieson, "have been transferred to the last day of the year." While some are satisfied with the theory of a Christian origin for Hogmanay, others claim for both name and institution a much more ancient descent. They trace the word variously to a Celtic, a Scandinavian, a German, even a Greek root, and agree only in this, that the rejoicings associated with the name are of Pagan birth. There seems to be some reason for connecting Hogmanay with the *gui* or *guy*—to whatever speech the word originally belongs—the name of the mystic mistletoe. But the whole subject of derivation and original meaning is wrapt in obscurity. One is on firmer and safer ground in speaking of the manner in which Hogmanay was more recently celebrated.

It has been said that customs properly belonging to Yule, or Christmas, have been transferred to the last day of the year. But the very term of "Yule" itself

was synonymous with Hogmanay in many, if not most, of the districts of central Scotland at the commencement of the century. Certain it is that it was no uncommon practice some sixty years ago to invite a person to his "Yule," as the entertainment was called, on the last day of December, in many parts of southern Perthshire. It would be interesting to know whether Yule was held in Ayrshire on the last night of the old year in the time of Burns. If it was, then Burns's only allusion to Hogmanay is under this name. It was on "blythe Yule nicht" that young Duncan Gray came (*sc.* soberly) "to woo" Maggie, and it was then that the too social company at the house of his *inamorata* were undeniably drunk.* It was the general practice—where the custom was known—for the farmer to give his servants their "Yule" or "Hogmanay" on the closing night of the old year. This consisted at least of a dram of whisky, with "cheese and bread." The same entertainment was repeated on the first Monday morning of the new year. A very noticeable feature of Hogmanay used to be the numerous gangs of respectably-dressed grown-up people, who, from early morning till night, perambulated the countryside, "thigging." Churlish and parsimonious farmers, like Nabal of old, spoke of the practice as wholesale begging, and probably the bad name they sought to fasten on the practice had

* It may have been on the same occasion, but of a much earlier year, that Robin's Jock came to woo "our Jenny," and it is interesting—if not satisfactory—to know that on that "feast even" also the company were "fou." See *The wooing of Jock and Jenny*, preserved by Bannatyne, printed in Ramsay's *Evergreen*.

the effect of checking it a good while before the Legislature made begging a crime. It was mainly engaged in by the respectable poor, whose industry kept them beyond need of parish support. As they were resident in the district in which they practised thigging, they were, of course, well known, and a good reputation for respectability commonly stood them in good stead. They carried with them bags and napkins for the conveyance of the expected gifts. These consisted in all cases of articles of food. At one farmstead a single thigger might have the gift of a peck, or even two pecks, of oatmeal, or a cheese, or half a ham, or a string of hog's puddings. As a rule, he did not need to introduce himself; he would be welcomed with the words, "Ye'll be come for your Hogmanay, na?" By nightfall many thiggers who had been supplied at each place of call on some such scale as I have quoted would be laden like little "cuddies," and have some difficulty in conveying their provisions home. Liberality like this, freely offered as a rule and frankly accepted, kept the neighbourhood in good agreement for the rest of the year. The Yule or Hogmanay thiggers were grown up; the Hansel collectors, again, were chiefly young people, and the gifts, freely enough bestowed upon them, were on a much smaller scale—though, if numerous enough, the sum total was considerable.

Another prime feature of a Hogmanay celebration was "the guising." The "guisards" were maskers, who, disguising their features and figure, visited their friends and acquaintance by night, and made mirth by singing, dancing, and acting, and by defying their

entertainers to find out who they were. The practice was in great favour with the youth of both sexes, who, under cover of darkness, and with the freedom of a perfect or even doubtful disguise, and stimulated besides by the hilarious spirit of the season, occasionally ran to licentious lengths in both speech and action. Because of the scandal which seemed inseparable from guising, the Church sternly opposed the practice. If the Scots borrowed the custom of guising at Yuletide, they were probably indebted to France for it. In that country it was extremely popular, and was conducted with such irreverence that the Papal clergy were constrained—but to little purpose—to interfere, and the practice was at last prohibited by the civil law towards the end of the seventeenth century. Guising in Scotland was the most picturesque feature in the celebration of Hogmanay. The maskers, who might be of any age from fifteen to five-and-twenty, usually went in pairs, but gangs of five or six were by no means uncommon. They were, of course, variously disguised, nearly all fantastically, and very many grotesquely. Sometimes, but rarely, they were “got up” to represent brutes—the swine and ass being the favourites. The simplest and easiest disguises were “cooming” the face with a burnt cork, or anointing it with a mixture of grease and soot, and turning the clothes of everyday wear inside out. But an old military uniform or the cast garments of old people of both sexes were to be seen on figures equally unaccustomed to the upright bearing of the soldier and the decrepitude of stooping age. Wherever they came they sang, and their preference

was usually for "character" songs, though any piece that happened to be popular at the time was readily drawn into their service. All classes, "wauf" and well-to-do alike, were found among the guisards. Many went masking for the fun of it, and were content with the entertainment which was set before them in the kitchens or parlours where they were received. But those who were willing to accept gifts were supplied with them, and money was sometimes added to the ordinary gift of "singing" cakes and cheese. Part of the fun—no inconsiderable part—on the entertainers' side was to identify the guisards. Young people of very tender age were allowed by their parents to go a-guising, but never to houses more than a few yards from their own homes. A little bodies' lilt to intimate they would now be glad to have their "Hogmanay" was

"Around the midden a' whippit a geese (*sic*)—
A'll sing nae mair till a' get a bit 'piece!'"

Older guisards, who were still new to the 'teens, were more explicit :—

"Get up, gudewife ! (*Lláfidge*) and dinna be sweir, .
An' deal your gear as long's you're here ;
The day will come when ye'll be dead,
And ye'll need neither meal nor bread."

But every district has its own *repertoire* of guisin'-e'en rhymes, which might be worth the collecting even yet. In towns the practice of guising is confined to young children, who make it the merest excuse for begging. They further seek to extend the practice beyond its proper bounds. In the country also the

younger guisards in their impatience would anticipate the recognised date by a night or two. But the practice received no encouragement from sticklers for the regular game. The youngsters would be dismissed ere they had well shown their smuttled faces or opened their mouths, with an "Awa' ; this is no guisin'-e'en !"

One or two strange domestic customs connected with Hogmanay, and probably still practised, may be noticed. One deals with fire, the other with water. Great care was taken on the last night of the old year not to let the fire die out in the grate. It was "gathered," for the purpose of preserving it, by means of peat or coal. No harm was supposed to attach to letting the fire out *per se* ; but there was the well-known difficulty of getting a light from a neighbour's fire next morning. It was not only certain to be grudged by the neighbour, but was likely to be refused. The old "freit" or superstition on the subject declared that whoever gave fire from his house on New Year's Day would have his house burned over his head before the year was out.

The "water" custom of Hogmany night was to slip from the house when the clock pronounced the doom of the old year, and, pitcher in hand, make for the nearest well in time to secure, before any of your neighbours, what was variously called the "crap," the "floo'er," and the "ream" of the water for the New Year just begun. The custom was restricted to the women of the hamlet or homestead ; in some localities only the young unmarried women. The ream of the well brought good fortune for the year. Some

antiquaries connect this, and the "fire" superstition, with classical usages of ancient Italy. Be that as it may, the "water" custom was still active, in my own knowledge, in a Perthshire hamlet not many years ago. The winner of the "well ream" for the year was known as the wife "wha gaed to the water wi' a pitcher an' brocht hame the ream o't in her pooch!" A wreath of snow lay across the well-mouth, concealing the limit of safety, and like poor Leezie in "Halloween"—

"In the pool
Out owre the lugs she plumpit
Wi' a plunge that nicht!"

HANSEL AND HANSEL-MONDAY.

“O gie the student his degree,
The advocate his hansel fee!”

IN the time of Allan Ramsay the term *hansel* in its ordinary use signified, in Ramsay's own words, “the first money that the merchant gets.” This meaning of the word, exactly as Ramsay restricted it, still obtains among the old-fashioned shopkeepers (*merchants* by courtesy) of the High Street of Edinburgh. The first coin received into the retail trader's till of a Monday morning is regarded as the hansel of the week's drawings. “How's business to-day, Mr Luckenbooth?” asks Mr Traveller in his cheery way on a Monday forenoon. “Just deein' awa’,” replies the despondent merchant; “my till's gapin' for its hansel yet!” It is interesting to observe that there is a good deal of the original meaning of the word in the shopkeeper's use of it. It is undoubtedly in its origin a commercial term. Clearly, the composition of the word is “hand” and “sell.” As thus compounded, it probably applied to a transaction of primitive barter, in which the articles exchanged passed at once into the hands of the contracting parties. It was delivery (*i.e. sale*) by hand the moment the bargain was made. The next

stage in the development of the word was apparently to apply it to the first instalment of a bargain. A portion or sample of the goods was handed over to the purchaser, in earnest or as *arles* (the two words are identical) that the rest of the goods would follow in due course. As thus described, the ceremony of handselling—*minus* the sample or first instalment—may be seen any market day, where a couple of farmers are concluding a bargain. As everybody knows, this is done by touching or shaking hands. The bargain-makers do not necessarily part company at such a hand-shaking. It is not the ceremony of leave-taking that is gone through, but the *empty* form (which, however, is held as binding) of making offer on the one hand and accepting on the other. The hand-clasping at a marriage ceremony has the same meaning.

From its original commercial use, the word was soon applied in other relations. Thus, on the authority of Jamieson, a piece of bread eaten before breakfast used to be called a morning hansel by the people of Galloway. The stomach received an *arles* that a full meal was in preparation. It will be in the knowledge of every Scotsman that Burns's auld farmer hanselled in the New Year to his auld mare with a ripp of corn—*i.e.*, with a few handfuls of unthreshed oats. The gift was by way of promise or earnest to "Maggie" that her master should not see her come to want in the ensuing year—that her "auld days would not end in starvin'." And, indeed, though the action meant that, the auld farmer confirmed it with words of explicit tenderness—

“ My last fow—
A heapit stimpert I'll reserve ane,
Laid by for you.”

Which means that if misfortune were to reduce him to his last bushel he should take good care to set aside a good half-peck of it for his “auld trusty servan’.” Hansel is sometimes employed to signify the first act of using anything. Thus, at a railway station near Buckhaven the other day, a buxom fisher lassie was heard lamenting the loss of her umbrella :—
“ It was its hansel ootin’—its first hoist ! ”

The first Monday of the New Year has long been known in Scotland, more especially the northern half of the Lowlands, as Hansel-Monday, from the custom among people of the working class of asking or receiving gifts or hansel from their well-to-do neighbours, and from each other, on that day. It lingers in those rural districts where Christmas may pass unmentioned, and where New Year's Day is only marked by the luxury of an unaccustomed dram, and the interchange of good wishes at the libation of it. The sticklers for the retention of the Hansel-Monday festivities reckon, of course, by the old style ; but the introduction in some quarters of the new way of reckoning, and the growing popularity of Christmas and New Year's Day, the latter especially, are confining the old-fashioned holiday of old Hansel-Monday to a continually diminishing area, and the probability is that the twentieth century, which is already within cry, will make quick and quiet work in dispatching it.

While the practice of hanselling and being hanselled was not so long ago pretty universal in the country,

and dates from times as ancient as Arthur of the Round Table (if I mistake not, there are incidental references to the practice at the court of King Arthur in the old metrical romances), the allocation of the first Monday of the year for the observance of the custom by servants calls for some explanation. It may be that the festivities of the first day of the year, as celebrated by the lords of the land, required the performance of extra duties by their servants, and that the latter had their turn of rejoicing and holiday-making on the first Monday after those festivities. This explanation hardly meets the case at all points, for when New Year's Day happens to fall on a Monday, it is kept in some districts as Hansel-Monday, while in others the holiday is deferred to the Monday following. It is thus a dispute whether Hansel-Monday is properly to be held on the first Monday of the New Year or on the first Monday *after* New Year's Day. The determination of the point must affect my explanation.

On farms, Hansel-Monday where it is kept is the great winter holiday of the year. Outdoor and indoor servants alike have a complete escape from bondage for the day, and many a farmer will own that the hardest day's work for him and his wife throughout the year occurs on Hansel-Monday. The necessary labours of the farm have to be done on that day by the members of his own household. Use and wont has given the day to his servants. Not only has he himself to help fill their place, but he is expected to hansom them, from foreman to herdboy, and part of the hansom almost invariably includes a gift of a little

money. In one view of the matter, it is a whole-some reversal of relations between rustics and their employers. A notable feature of the manner in which country people celebrate Hansel-Monday is their evident desire to enjoy the whole twenty-four hours of the holiday. They are astir at the sma' hours after midnight, and it is near midnight again before they think of lying down. In their impatience to have the holiday commence, young people usually waken the villages by kicking old tin pans at unearthly hours of the morning through the quiet streets. Thereafter they begin a house-to-house visitation for gifts, while their awakened elders spend the day in feasting and drinking ; taking part in raffles for currant loaves, watches wheelbarrows, or pigs ; and drinking toddy in turn at each others' houses in the evening.

ST VALENTINE'S DAY.

“ Yestreen at the valentines’ dealing
My heart to my mou’ gied a sten,
For thrice I drew ane without failing,
And thrice it was written—*Tam Glen!*”

THE practice to which these well-known lines of Burns refer has clean passed away. It was common enough when they were written—now one hundred years ago—and in rural districts of Scotland was probably universal. In these districts it has lingered longest; and there must be many old or elderly persons amongst us who remember in their youth taking part in the practice. The century, when it was still among the “thirties,” looked with no disfavour upon the rustic merriment that attended a “valentines’ dealing.” But its own inventions and scientific discoveries, its projects and its anticipations, have had the effect of breaking its connection with many a traditional and time-honoured institution, of which the great annual lovers’ festival of St Valentine’s Eve was one. Nobody keeps vigil for the 14th of February now. The festival has gone even more clean and completely than its more antiquated but not more joyous sister institutions of Hallowe’en and Hogmanay. The favourite sports and customs of this inventive

nineteenth century are almost entirely those of its own creation. It has broken with the mirth and sociality of the past more effectually than any of its predecessors.

It was the custom in every rustic community when Scotland was still ancient—that is, less than a century ago—for one or more companies of young unmarried folks of both sexes to meet together on St Valentine's Eve, in the house of one or other of their more socially-inclined neighbours, for the purpose of trying the award of fate in a drawing of valentines. The arrangements for the frolic were of the simplest. Yet they were sufficiently effective to secure a gathering. Then, at least, it was true that in the spring the young folks' fancy "lightly turned to thoughts of love." It was only necessary to provide two bags and a quantity of tickets bearing the names of eligible individuals well known in the community. The bachelors of the rustic gathering drew from the bag containing the female names, while the maids drew from that which held the names of the bachelors. At some assemblies the names were limited to the individuals constituting the company; but as it seldom happened that the company was equally composed of members of both sexes, and as it was necessary for the proper observance of the festival that each person should be provided with a mate, it was not unusual to add the names of absentees. Some of the absentees were—from advanced age, or evil temper, or bodily deformity or defect—anything but desirable partners: a circumstance which, of course, heightened the interest of the drawing, and gave greater variety to the blind awards

of the "poke" of destiny. Delight or dissatisfaction rarely failed to show itself in the countenances of the drawers, even when they sought to conceal the name on the ticket. One of two things could be inferred from the concealment of a name that had been drawn—either that fate's award was the object of special dislike or even aversion, or was the object of sincere but secret affection. It was usual to make appeal to the decision of the lot three times (they did the same in the "luggie" ceremonial at Hallowe'en) for better assurance of the will of fate; and his or her lot was, of course, fixed beyond all alteration who drew—as did Tam Glen's sweetheart—the one name "thrice without failing." As a rule, the result of each person's drawing was known to the rest; and it occasionally happened that the bashfulness of young people, quite prepared to become mutual lovers, was overcome by the decision of St Valentine, and that in this way real engagements were formed which by and by matured into matrimony. Married people, especially wives, belonging to the neighbourhood, attended those gatherings, and showed, as passive but by no means silent spectators, an interest in the awards of the love-lottery as keen as that of the most active of the young folks for whose behoof the day of St Valentine had been appointed. They encouraged the bashful girl and bantered the conceited bachelor, and generally kept the fun and excitement from flagging often till a late hour of the night. When the lottery was at last over, and some were happy, while some were disappointed, and all were excited, the homely entertainment of a few "girdle" cakes and a

“twalpenney's worth o nappy
Wad inak' the bodies unco happy.”

They became hilarious, and sang and danced it off to the late long hour, heedless of the scowl of the Kirk, which was (neither divinely nor humanly) inimical to late hours, and expressly hostile to what it called promiscuous dancing.

This resort to lot and good St Valentine for a lover was by no means confined to rustic communities in Scotland. It was known and practised in England, and in several countries on the Continent, in mediæval times, and was very much in vogue among people of rank and riches in the 15th and 16th centuries. It seems to have been usual then for the lovers to exchange presents, and to maintain a kind of chivalrous bearing towards each other, of a nature which has been compared to the relation that existed between a knight of romance and his ladye-love, for at least one year—that is, till St Valentine permitted and provided a change. In the reign of the Merry Monarch it would seem from the Diary of that prince of tattlers, Mr Pepys, that married people could take part in the celebrations of St Valentine's Eve, and that the custom of presenting gifts had sunk, through inability or refusal to accept the award of the Saint, into the payment of forfeits—similar to the mail which spinsters, if they choose, may, in certain circumstances, levy on a 29th of February, only much costlier.

The practice of sending “valentine” letters by post was a later feature of the celebration of St Valentine's Day. It has not yet entirely disappeared, but every twelvemonth there is all over the country, in regions

where the custom lingers, a sensible diminution in the number of those fragrant billets. Whilom they were of aggregate bulk enough to break the postman's back ; now he can carry them in the pocket of his vest, if the Government allow him one. Serving maids and men, but especially the former, in our larger towns, and a fraction of the peasantry inhabiting the more forlorn parishes, are the modern representatives—few in number—of those ancient lovers who yearly sought out and saluted their mates by favour of the post. Their mis-sives, though calling in the art of both painter and poet, had yet a certain monotony of features which, for want of development, helped, we think, in some measure to put an end to the custom. The painter or designer confined himself to the representation of a pair of genteel lovers ; a fat Cupid or two, drawing vigorous bows ; and the never-failing emblem of a brace of bleeding hearts, pitifully pinned together. Roses filled the foreground, and a church-spire rose up as a signal of hope and help in the rear. The poet's part of the work was to condense as much sweet sentiment into two or four lines of verse as—with the aid of the united Nine, no doubt—he could possibly manage.

“ The rose is red, the violet's blue,
Honey's sweet, and so are you ! ”

This was to the point without being epigrammatic. Or in a less luscious and direct, but more tender and somewhat forgetful strain—

“ Look on those eyes that ever gaze
With truth and love on thine,
The voice that wearies not in praise
Of thee, my valentine.”

("He goes but to see a voice which he heard," says Peter Quince in the play!) We quote from a dainty but frail old print, with a deep border of paper lace-work, and a thin garland of roses and violets, enclosing the portrait of a languishing young Romeo-Adonis, whose eyes may be truthful and loving, but whose voice is scarcely visible. There can be no doubt that many an honest, simple-minded rustic, whose heart was seriously affected, believed in the institution and efficacy of the postal valentine. The male specimen—always the more lavish—has been known to expend five shillings, or even more, upon the print which best expressed his fears and hopes, his general unworthiness, and his particular wishes; painfully to smear in the letters of his own name and those of his charmer; and with much sheep-stealing-like secrecy to commit the missive to the hands of the waylaid postman. Happy if in return he received a sixpenny leaf from his Dulcinea! to take odd peeps at it among the February furrows, and at last to consign it to the "locker" of his kist as a valuable treasure scarcely inferior to his whole year's fee. Ridiculous and vulgar valentines came in among all this sweetly sentimental sort, and hastened that decay of the postal valentine which the monotony of the artists' imagery had already commenced. The Christmas card—a formidable rival, capable of expansive development, and of universal use throughout Christendie—crept rapidly into favour, and the valentine was doomed. It may be that, unless the card keep clear of the threatening taint of vulgarity, its doom may follow that of the valentine.

"Who was St Valentine?" is a question often asked

and often unanswered. Why *he* was selected to be the patron saint of youthful lovers is the more difficult query to answer. That he was a Christian priest who suffered martyrdom in pagan Rome, in the second or third century of our era, is generally believed ; and we have the further information that he was killed with clubs and then decapitated, and that his death occurred some time in February. It was, I think, Douce in his "Illustrations of Shakespeare" that first connected the "valentines' dealing" with a very similar feature of the old Roman festival of the Lupercal, held in the middle of February. It has been suggested that the Church, being unable to abolish the popular old pagan custom of the Lupercalian games, contrived (*suo more*) to give them a Christian aspect by placing them under the presidency of a saint to whom a day in mid-February was dedicated. The Church had no choice ; Valentine was the only saint in its calendar associated with February. Similarly the Scandinavian celebration of Yule was converted into the religious institution of Christmas.

It is out of place here to do more than refer to the many allusions to St Valentine's Day and its usages which are to be found in the pages of poet, romancer, and essayist, from Chaucer and Shakespeare continuously down to Charles Lamb and Sir Walter Scott. St Valentine had an ephemeral literature in the days of the missives. He has the honour of a standard literature of goodly bulk besides.

ALL FOOLS' DAY.

It is with a touch of characteristic humour that Lamb, in the delightful essays of Elia, makes incidental reference to All Fools' Day as "the general holiday." The expression may be said to imply sarcasm, but there is no sting in it—for it covers the speaker. It is genial and gently insinuated. As genially inclusive but more explicit is the testimony of Sir Walter: "All Fools' Day, the only saint that keeps up some degree of credit in the world; for fools we are with a vengeance." How different is the direct denunciation of Carlyle, that the population of these islands—a representative community—amounts to so many millions, "mostly fools!" One is certain the grim censor did not include himself.

There is a time for everything, says Solomon; and the world, in addition to indiscriminate and mostly unseasonable indulgence of the frailty, has even set apart a statutory time for the practice of folly. Even the grave and ponderous Roman, *dominus orbis terrarum*, stooped to hy-jinks, and found it sweet in its place; he permitted the Saturnalia, when Davus domineered, and he donned the demeanour of Davus, and topsyturvydom reigned in the social world. Christianity, which put an end to the folly of Pagan worship, found

it a harder task to suppress the folly of Pagan fun, and was fain to compound for the loss of its dignity by a nominal control of the popular instinct. From the compromise are said to have sprung the institutions of Christmas and Hogmanay, and the figures of the Monks of Misrule and the Abbots of Unreason, and other similar mediæval phenomena. All Fools' Day, which for some centuries now has been associated with the first day of April, is believed by many to have been one of those phenomena. Nobody needs to be told that the essential feature of the celebration of All Fools' Day is to dispatch the simple or the unwary on some meaningless message or absurd errand. This feature of the festival is supposed to have been caught, by the old unregenerate heathen appetite for fun, out of the mysteries or miracle plays by means of which the early Church sought to combine religious instruction and amusement for the benefit of the masses. A favourite subject for such entertainment at Easter was the trial of Christ, in the course of which the impersonator of Jesus was sent backwards and forwards from tribunal to tribunal—from Caiaphas to Annas and from Herod to Pilate—in endless journeys, until it was decided in whose jurisdiction the trial was to proceed. The rude mob, it is argued, saw exquisite fun in those endless wanderings, and took to imitating it in the privacy of their own neighbourhood by practising upon some witless or simple-minded acquaintance. By and by the custom, from the very first an Easter one, got to be definitely associated with an easily remembered date, the 1st of April; and the connection once established, has

existed ever since. This explanation is probably more ingenious than genuine.

The Romans had their indulgence of foolery, as by law appointed, in December at the Feast of Saturn; over most, if not all, Europe at the present time, and for the last four or five centuries at least, the time for this indulgence has been fixed at the first day of April. It is impossible to say authoritatively when or why the change was made. Of course, it is possible that European contemporary nations of the Saturnalian age at Rome had their Fools' Festival, north of the Danube or west of the Rhine, at a different time of the year, perhaps even at a time corresponding to our 1st of April. It is certainly curious, and to the ethnologist suggestive, that from time immemorial the inhabitants of India, of all ranks, races, and religions, have kept a holiday of the same kind and at much the same season as All Fools' Day. This is the festival (in honour of Krishna and his son Kama, the god of love) variously known as the Holi, Huli, or Hulica. It begins about the middle of March, and continues for fifteen days, a special effort to accentuate the festival being reserved for the last day—which, it should be observed, is the day preceding the 1st of April. In the larger towns the British have restricted the holiday season, for various obvious reasons, to a couple of days or so. A learned authority on the large and labyrinthine subject of Hindoo Mythology writes as follows: "The Huli among the Hindus reminds one strongly of the Saturnalia with the Romans; people of low condition take liberties with their superiors in a manner not admissible

on other occasions. The chief fun in public is throwing coloured powders on the clothes of persons passing in the streets, and squirting about tinted waters. . . . Sending simpletons on idle errands contributes also to the delights of the Huli, and this is performed exactly similar to our English ceremony of making April Fools on the first of that month, and is common to all ranks of Hindus; and Mohammedans join in it." Elsewhere he writes: "During the whole period of fifteen days the people go about scattering powder and red liquor over each other, singing, and dancing, and annoying passengers by mischievous tricks, coarse witticisms, and vulgar abuse."

Each country in Europe would seem to have its own way of designating the simple-minded victim of the 1st of April. He is in France an April fish, in England an April fool, and a gowk in Scotland. The time-honoured institution of "fool-making" in England is as active as ever it was. But the practice, as in Scotland, is now chiefly confined to young folks and rustics. The liberties taken by the practitioners of the pastime are ridiculous, but harmless enough. *Punch's* sketch is a representative one. "Fust of Hapril, sir!" says boy in buttons, with a grin, as his high and mighty master breaks an empty egg at the breakfast table. To pin a piece of paper to the coat-tail of a grave senior; to leave on his back an impression in chalk of the legend *To Let*; to arrest his attention by the untruthful announcement that he has dropped his diary; at worst, to convey to him, with a serious face, the false message that Mr This or Mrs

That would like to see him immediately on a matter of importance—is generally the amount of the roguery. Now and again an absent-minded philosopher or simple-minded Nathanael is entrapped—without an occasional victim the game would die out—and great is the delight of the trickster. The victim, if he be wise, or has at least some lingering vestiges in his heart of a vanished youth-time, takes the innocent deception good-humouredly, as a sensible man in a frequented thoroughfare takes the liberty of the wind with his fugitive hat.

The age of the institution of fool-making in England has never been clearly made out. There are few traces of it in literature * or the social history of the country before the seventeenth century. Swift's ineffectual attempt to make April fools of fashionable London, by starting an absurd rumour, is well known. The great Dean was fond to a fault of practical joking, and if the project failed it was neither his nor his footman's fault; his fellow-conspirators forgot or neglected their part of the plot.

In Scotland the victim of an idle errand is called a gowk, and is said to "gang the gowk's ærend." Occasionally the daft-like errand consumes a solid day. As thus: Tammas, a sober and respectable peasant, who takes life somewhat too seriously, departs in his Sunday coat with a letter purporting (believe the apprentice!) to come from the local grocer, and

* Congreve, in *The Old Bachelor*, defines an April fool as a person who is "always upon some errand that's to no purpose, ever embarking in adventures, yet never coming to harbour."—Heartwell in Act I. scene iv.

addressed to a bonnet laird living some six or eight miles in the virgin wilderness. The laird spells his way silently through the enclosure ("Give the gowk his dinner and send him on!"), and, being equal to the occasion, keeps a composed countenance, scrawls a similar missive to a distant neighbour, and dispatches the gowk with it, perhaps six miles farther into a dreary upland of whaaps and whins. The game goes on while daylight endures, and at last, on the stroke of curfew, the half-suspicious and wholly bewildered wanderer returns to the local grocer, having accomplished his destined rounds. The local grocer reads the note he brings, and at a glance perceives the posture of affairs. He asks the bearer if he knows what is in the note, and handing it to him, remarks, in a tone meant to be conciliatory—"Ye ken, Tammas, this is the first of Aprile; but ye've gotten a braw day an' a fine view o' the country!" Meanwhile the grocer's apprentice, though it is "shutting-up" time, suddenly finds something to do at the farthest end of the village.

The connection of the gowk with the first of April is commonly, I believe, misunderstood. "Gowk" in Scotland has long been synonymous with "fool." "You may think me rather foolishly employed," wrote young Michael Bruce to a correspondent (in a letter, by the way, of considerable literary significance), "for I am writing a sang about a gowk." The reference is believed to be to the famous "Ode to the Cuckoo," attributed by some to the Kinneswood poet's younger companion, John Logan. In England also, for at least three centuries, a stupid person has

now and again been called "cuckoo." "O' horse-back, ye cuckow!" says Falstaff, correcting a misapprehension of Prince Hal's. But naturalists tell us the gowk is rather rogue than fool. It makes its home in another bird's nest; it practises on the simplicity of its neighbours. Leaving its parental cares to others, it

"makes on joyful wing,
Its annual visit round the globe,
Companion of the spring."

To go the gowk's errand may mean to go, like it, wandering from land to land without coming to any settlement. More probably to go the gowk's errand is to go for the bird—to find and fetch it. This is no easy matter, for the bird is both shy and rare; its ubiquity is only apparent. Its note is loud, unique, and ventriloquial; it is "at once far off and near." It was an invisible mystery to Wordsworth, who had keen eyes and long acquaintance with country objects. Its cry made him "look a thousand ways in bush, and tree, and sky." Not many have seen a live cuckoo. Its "curious shout" may attract the attention of every individual in a district, but it is probably the shout of one bird after all. There may have been a transference of the bird's name to the person sent to find and fetch the bird, *i.e.*, dispatched on a vain and idle errand.

THE KING'S BIRTHDAY IN EDINBURGH A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

OF all holidays dear to the civic heart there was, once on a day, none to match in the ancient capital the festival of the King's Birthday. We are, I trust, none the less a loyal people, and we have probably as great a capacity for the enjoyment of holidays, but we are less demonstrative in the expression of our loyalty, and our holiday delight, than were our buoyant forefathers of merry memory. Perhaps we know more, and think more; we certainly take our pleasure less hilariously. A pale cast has crept over the native hue. We are older and dourer. If we go through the ceremonial of joy which tradition has sanctioned, it is with something of the sadness, at least the seriousness, of a religious duty; it is often done perfunctorily; almost, indeed, mechanically. And now and again, as the swift years glide, we perceive with a sigh a part of the time-honoured ceremonial drop away; but we make no effort to retain it, or it falls without being perceived. The bundle of tradition gets less and less, and its original bulk is only known to him who returns to glean the travelled path.

The anniversary of the Royal birthday has been associated in the popular mind with summer weather

for now considerably more than a century. The month of its observance in the long reign of George III. was June; it was August in the times of George IV. and the latest William, and the city has now celebrated its fifty-seventh May holiday under Victoria. It is unnecessary to describe the present method of keeping the holiday in Edinburgh. The professions of law and arms, following Court guidance, did their rejoicing on Wednesday, each in its own characteristic way; the former ceased from wrangling and sank into silence, while the latter thundered and volleyed its ecstasy over the town. On Thursday, Church and Education took their pastime, in processions through the streets and excursions to the country; while Trade scarcely half shut its shop, and Labour toiled on, with only a casual and regardless glance at its festive brethren. There was a display of the military, and in the evening of rockets and such other fiery manifestations of juvenile mirth as squibs and bonfires. An uproarious excursionist or two, raucous, and redolent of rural inns, disturbed the street at midnight. Then came peace, emphasised by the patrolling boot. The Queen had entered upon another year of her long reign.

A hundred years ago the holiday was observed with more unanimity and heartiness. George the Third was King, and had already reigned for thirty-four years. The festival was held on the 4th day of June. It was called, indeed, "The Fourth of June" as often as it was called "The King's Birthday." This was owing partly to the long reign and partly to the holiday being regularly and rigidly kept on the right birthday. The fun, with

its concomitant noise and bustle in the streets of Old Edinburgh, seems to have been extreme. It was a hurly-burly past describing; one had to see it to know it. Fergusson, the city laureate, referring to the year 1770 or '71, doubted if even in London there was such a display of joyously reckless loyalty as animated the soul and body of Auld Reekie on the King's Birthday. He quite approved of it in the main, and spoke of it with pride. He was

“Fain to think the joy the same
In Lunnon toon as here at hame.”

The universally-recognised method of holiday-making in the ancient capital then included, as an essential element thereof, copious and consecutive drams. It was an article of the city creed that drinking and tipping were the “stoops” of enjoyment. How could people rejoice without the countenance of Bacchus? the native Bacchus—not the wine god; Bacchus in tartan! How could they sing without “whiskey to scour their hawses?” Young and old, rags and rank, blind and cripple, began the festival and kept it up with strong drink. And there was no liquor question; even the clergy were sound on the subject, or regarded it as secular and beyond the pulpit pale.

The Auld Kirk shook its bells. St Giles, the tutelary saint of the city—that is, the old town (the new town disowned his guardian care—no wonder he scowls on Princes Street *), piped to the dancing of his “royd” but faithful bairns by “screeding them

* It was at first proposed to name Princes Street St Giles' Street.

aff a loyal tune." The old Castle on the rock by and by added its encouragement to the general rejoicing. The national flag was run up; the regulation salute broke, in smoke and thunder, from the battery; and, as if managed by clockwork, out came "the sodger blades and cocked their musket." There was universal regret that Mons Meg could not join her note to the general joy. How she would have astonished the country herds of Fife and the nowte on the distant Ochils! Alas! she had cracked her voice a century before, doing honour to a Duke of York.

Whisky, and the Castle guns, and St Giles and his (new) peal of bells are still with us, and are still—though with diminished effect—acceptable auxiliaries in the celebration of a Royal Birthday in Edinburgh. But one notable feature in the ceremonial of the olden time has vanished for ever. The Commissioner's Walk—with all courtesy, the gathering of the sable Assembly—with all reverence be it spoken! do not make amends for the want of it! We have the red coats and the black coats, but where are the Blue Gowns? Alack! mendicancy is a crime; even the aristocracy of the order, as Sir Walter phrased it, the king's bedesmen, the chartered and privileged beggars, the Edie Ochiltrees, have been overreached by that merciless measure of the Statute book, and are not. Their memory and their name are gone. Last century about this time they were not yet past their full glory on the King's Birthday. Let it be understood I speak of the year 1794. That year there were neither more nor less than thirty-four Blue Gowns or privileged gaberlunzies in Scotland. On the

morning of the 4th of June they were assembled with one more from different and even distant parts of braid Scotland—a picturesque throng of venerable but tattered forms—and then stood in front of Holyrood waiting for their livery of a new light blue gown, to which was attached a pewter badge, and their pension of fifty-six shillings Scots handed to each of them in a twalpenny leather purse by the King's officer, who figures in the older records of the Scottish Exchequer as the Royal "Eleemosynar." The institution of "the Blue-gown bodies" was a Scottish one, unknown to other countries. There was one for every year the Sovereign had reigned, and the pension (in addition to the yearly gift of a new cloak of "blew claith lined with harden") was a shilling Scots—that is, a penny sterling, for every year the King had lived. They were in return expected to pray for the King's health, and it was of course their interest to pray for a long reign, hence they were known as the King's *Bedesmen*. Robert Fergusson draws a graphic picture of their appearance in Edinburgh on the Fourth, just before they assumed the new livery provided for them. They were in the last extremity of ruined raggedness—

"Like scarecrows new taen down fra woodies."

However, a transformation was soon made. They flung off their clouted "duds," and got their pay, and then

"What magistrate mair prood is
On King's birthday?"

But they had other gear that day to gather. After the Royal bounty was received, they formed in

procession in the Palace yard and marched up Canongate and High Street—not unlike a certain other procession of greater pretensions—to the Tolbooth, and there, at the north wall, were presented by the Town Council with another service of leather purses and twalpennies. Thereafter they proceeded to the High Church, or Cathedral Church of St Giles, and were preached to, or at, by one of His Majesty's chaplains. Scott records that he had heard from one of the preachers that the Blue Gowns made a most inattentive audience. Their inattentiveness was doubtless the result of impatience, of both a particular and a general kind. In a general way they, as "gangrels," were impatient of restraint; and as they were probably "fasting from all but sin," they had a particular reason to be impatient of a long address on duties which they either knew or never meant to discharge. Immediately after the sermon they were led to a substantial meal, and having discussed it, they were free again to wander and squander over the length and breadth of the land, to scorn the supposed comforts of a settled life, and to "sorn" at the King's command on the industrious portion of the population.

A review of the City Guard, a kind of military police, which consisted of about a hundred invalided soldiers, mostly Tonalds and Tougals, which had been first instituted in times anterior to the Union, was an important part of the ceremonial of the King's Birthday in Old Edinburgh. A hundred years ago they were a savage and truculent gang of rascals, or blackguardly bandits, if poor Fergusson's testimony is

trustworthy, who did not scruple to spill the blood of the citizens they had been embodied and were maintained to cherish and protect. They were furnished with firelocks and formidable weapons known as Lochaber axes, with which they were licensed, apparently at their own discretion, to hack and stab. They were extremely unpopular, until latterly they became rather objects of good-humoured derision than downright hatred. There were constant collisions between them and the Edinburgh mobs. On all occasions that offered favourably, they were treated as fair game by the festive city youth. They were stoned, and pelted with mud by hostile rabbles on the King's Birthday—the more especially that on that day they were carefully shaven and powdered in honour of the King.

Then, as now, part of the citizens kept the Royal holiday by resorting to the fields, where "lambs were sporting on the gowany braes." As night fell, the town became disorderly and riotous. A raid was made upon wandering cats by lawless apprentices ; an outlook was kept by the mobocratic youth for a stray buck or beau at whom they could launch their squibs, and fiery flying serpents, and unsavoury unmentionable missiles ; there were street rows and fights, cracked crowns and broken noses ; deep drinking, loud swearing, and "deeds of crime in darkness done." Next morning the Council Chaumer was crowded with the civic heroes and victims of a too tumultuous loyalty.

A SUMMER EXCURSION FROM EDINBURGH IN THE OLDEN TIME.

“Fareweel, bonnie Scotland ! I’m awa to Fife.”—*Old Saying.*

THE citizen of Edinburgh in the last quarter of last century was still content to repeat his years in unbroken series within the extremely limited area of the Auld Toun. He never wandered. From year’s end to year’s end he was to be found at home, burrowing at the feet of St Giles. He lived among his business, strolled into a neighbouring tavern for his meridian at the summons of the dram-bell, and returned with little delay, but yet leisurely, to his shop or office, fortified till dinner-time. Dinner-time came early, and divided with only a moderate interval the hours of the business day. Indeed, the greater part of the professional or trading day was after that. The hour for tea, if the effeminacy was practised, was four o’clock. At eight o’clock the citizen was free—

“Auld St Giles at aucht o’clock
Garr’d merchant loons their shoppies lock.”

The next two hours were surrendered to sociality and recreation. If the weather was fine and the season permitted, the burgess daundered to Thamson’s Green, it might be, for a quiet game of bowls, or took

a turn or two in sober pursuit of the gowff ba' on Bruntsfield Common. If it was winter or wet weather, he dived incontinent into some profound hole of the High Street, and maintained in the benmost bore of the close, in some secret howff hallowed to all his senses by long use and wont, his reputation for conviviality and a sound constitution. If he was in the mood for hy-jinks, time during the dark hours was of no account—neither was liquor; he was prepared to spill them lavishly. If he was soberly inclined he sat till ten, interchanging song and seriousness over a bottle or two of Younger, a haddie lug, and a gill. At the tuck of the Guard-drum his rotundity toddled home, insensible of evening savours, and rolled into blankets and oblivion. Sleep cleared his drumlie pow on the downy cod, and next morning he began a new day, another yet the same, before his desk or behind his apron. This, the even tenor of his way, he varied on a Saturday or Sabbath afternoon by a short excursion to some place or other that had the attraction of a change-house, within easy run of the High Street—at least within view of the airy crown of St Giles. Perhaps he drank toddy or port—claret was no longer the favourite it had been—at Lawson's, on the shore of Leith, on the secular afternoon; on the holy day he cooled his stomach with a dish of mussel-brose at Newhaven, or with a prievin' o' fat pandores a little further east the coast. A more distant excursion, beyond the bounds of Mid-Lothian, was the event of the year; but a summer's jaunt of one solid day's duration to Fife became for the most part only a memory to him after middle age.

In a mock-heroic poem that has been strangely overlooked by the historian of social life in Old Edinburgh (Modern Edinburgh is not older than the century), Robert Fergusson has left us a vivid and particular relation of the manner in which the younger and more enterprising burgesses were wont to consume their summer holiday in an excursion to the "unhallowed"* shores of Fife. The day selected was almost certainly a Saturday, the month probably June or July—

"When nature's rokelay green
Is spread ower ilka rig o' corn
To charm our rovin' een ;"

and the weather, no doubt, had been on its good behaviour for at least a week. But let us follow in all its essential features the poet's description of *his* outing ; it may serve as a sample. He took this particular holiday on a Saturday near the longest day ; and 1771—he was then still a minor *in age*—may be ventured upon as the very year. The spring of that year wore a wintry aspect. Pentland's "tourin' taps" were "buried aneath great wreaths o' snaw ;" not one bold golfer was to be seen "driving his ba' frae whins or tee,"

"Nor doucer folk wysin' ajee
The bias boulds on Thamson's green."

So late as April the Braid Burn and the Water of Leith were "rushing with torrents of dissolving snow." But seasonable weather came in June after all, and

* Twin chronic animosities of Fergusson were Fife and the City Guard. Of Fife he writes—

"To Fife we steer—of all beneath the sun,
The most unhallowed 'mid the Scotian plains."

with it to the breasts of the younger "burgers" the annual longing for a voyage to the Strand of Fife. The few needful arrangements were made the night before at Danny Douglas's in the Anchor Close, or Johnny Dowie's in Liberton Wynd; there, probably in the Crown or the Coffin Room, the party of three or four congenial spirits, such as Jamie Rae, and Hamilton, and Woods, was organised, and the plan of the day's campaign drawn up at a sober symposium. Next day at an early hour—

"While morn, wi' bonny purplin' smiles,
Kisses the air-cock o' Saint Giles,"—

the adventurous party, after breaking their fast on beef, sallied forth from the still slumbering city, and made for the port o' Leith on shanksnaigie, by Provost Drummond's new bridge and the Walk. The bridge, built only two years before, spanned the burn and valley of the Nor' Loch, then haunted by ducks, both wild and tame, and gave a high and dry path to our party from the Tron to Mutrie's Hill—the brae-top from which now rises the dome of the Register House. The Walk, now an enclosed street and roaring channel of traffic, was then an exposed and lonely enough gravel path, some twenty feet broad, which, from being a military mound thrown up about a century and a quarter before, had become a pavement or promenade, beaten into shape and feature by the feet of citizens taking the evening air. Cromwell may be said to have been the ultimate cause of this mound, for it was cast up by the Covenanting commander, Davy Leslie, to keep him out of Edinburgh. It was in its turn the

raison d'être of the North Bridge. Previous to the making of the North Bridge, intercourse with Leith had mainly been by Canongate and the Easter Road, the Walk, as the name implies, being strictly devoted to pedestrians. But after 1769 vehicular traffic and the hoofs of horses invaded the Walk, and, in a decade or two, spoiled its amenities to the daundering burgess. The wheels of carts and carriages cut it, and it fell into such disrepair that its usefulness, which was now revealed, could not be maintained without great expense to the community.

Along the Walk, with green fields on each side of them, and a summer day stretching invitingly before them, our party hastened to the Kirkgate, and at last made the shore of Leith in time for the early boat. But there was no time for a refreshing "synd" of any species of nappy liquor at any of the numerous taverns that lined the water. For as soon as they appeared in view, their ears were assailed by a raucous voice at the gangway that roared peremptorily, "All aboard for Kinghorn! Straight aboard for Kinghorn!" The ordinary bustle of embarking passengers ensued; bodies and bundles tumbled in obediently to the stern call, which sounded more like a demand than an invitation. Equally stern was the note of the skipper, who bawled irately to the boatmen to hoist sail. Presently a dozen of brown hands were unfastening the moorings or hauling the sheets, and, glad to be free, the vessel glided out from the harbour and stood northwards across the lifting Firth for Kinghorn Pier. A strong west wind was blowing from "the Ferry"—*i.e.* Queensferry—and the rocking boat now and again

dipped her canvas, and fled precipitately over the white caps. Our party had time to cool, and it appears the passage was long and rough enough to favour an epidemic of sea-sickness. Even in very fine calm weather few cared to cross the Firth unless on business ; and those who could afford it preferred to pass to the North by taking the Forth at Stirling at the well-known bridge. Some took the Leith route as a medicine, as people take "the waters." About mid-channel, when the boat was "half-owre, half-owre," the crew commenced the interesting part of their duties—the collection of the fares. They were liable to be imposed upon, and debates would occasionally arise about counterfeit ha'pence. Vagrants, too, were sometimes unearthed from the hold, where they had tried to stow away their rags and wretchedness in the hope of escaping payment of the passage groat. At length Fife was reached, and pale and sharp-set our voyagers briskly hastened to the friendly inn, where they dined, and drank, and snuffed for a couple of hours at least. Snuff was the nostrum for a heavy meal. They were in the village of Kinghorn, which fame has consecrated to the memory of Patie Birnie, bard and gut-scraper ; but, alas ! Crowdero was dead, and his elegy chanted (by Allan Ramsay) half a century before. Fergusson and his friends were the very men to have relished his eccentric humour and pawky by-play.

" When strangers landed, wow sae thrang,
Fuffin' and peghin' he wad gang,
And crave their pardon that sae lang
He'd been a-comin' ;
Syne his bread-winner oot he'd bang
And fa' to bummin'."

He was the reputed author of the richly humorous song with which Kennedy used to convulse a Scottish audience, "The Auld Man's Mare she's dead," which he sang and played with comical looks and gestures, "laughing and groaning at the same time"—"his beard," says Ramsay, "being no small addition to the diversion." It is right to say that he was in the habit of disavowing the authorship (words or air, or both)—perhaps to have the pleasure of praising the song. For he would conclude his performance with "A bonnie auld thing this, indeed, an't like your honour!" After their meal our travellers hung about the village, admiring from the green braes that overhang the beach the glories of the Lothian coast, and exploring a shore cave which used to harbour bandits. Fergusson had always little to say about the scenery of Fife itself; it was good enough as a stand from which to view his beloved Edinburgh, with her castled rock, and tufted groves and spires. On this theme his language was always fervent, but seldom so rapturous as the following:—

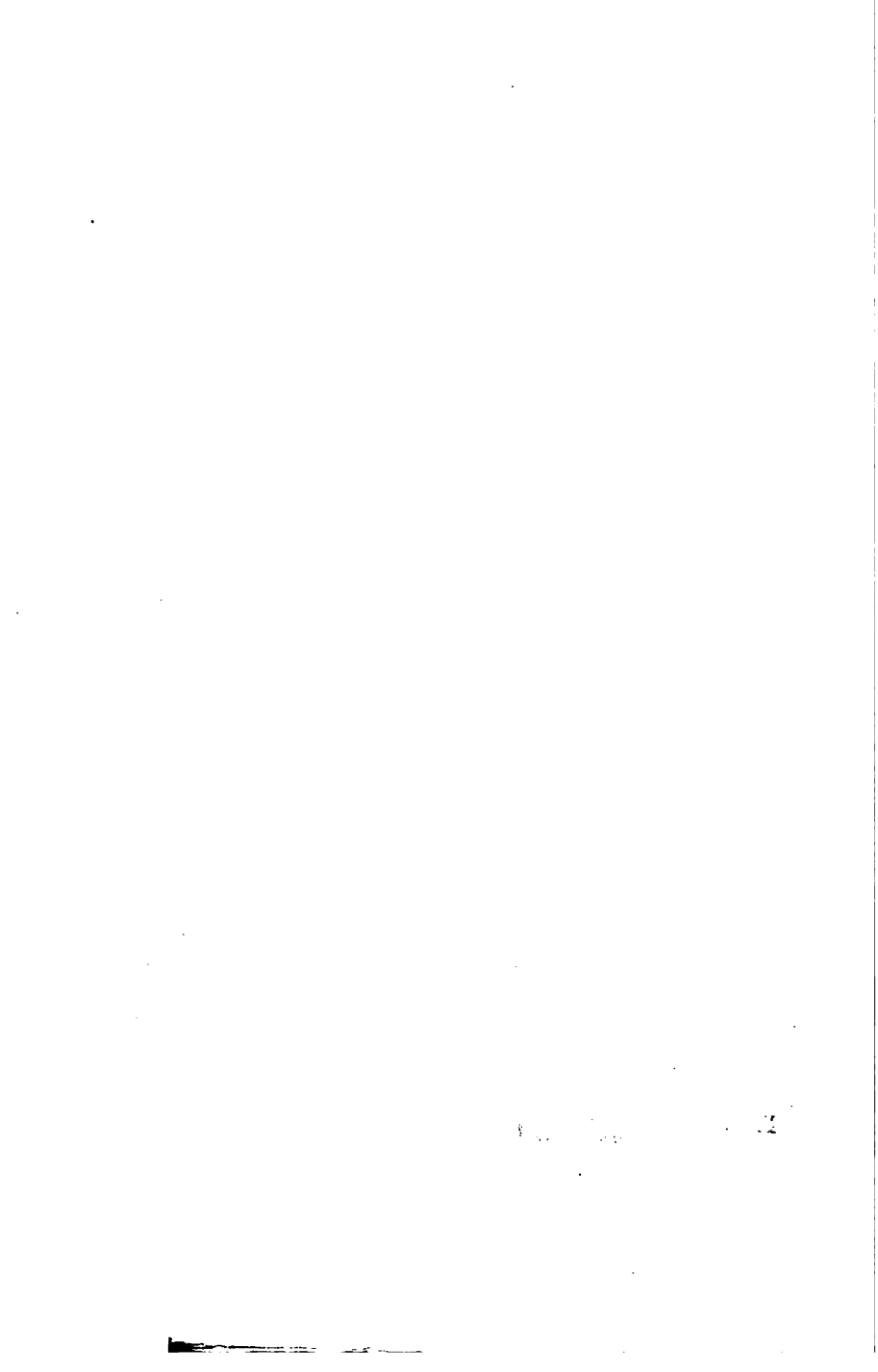
"As glower the saints when first is given
A favoured keek o' gloire and heaven,
On earth nae mair they bend their een,
But quick assume th' angelic mien :
So I on Fife wad glower no more,
But gallop to Edina's shore."

It was afternoon when our party set out on foot westwards, some twelve or fourteen miles, to Inverkeithing. They passed Burntisland not long after leaving Kinghorn, and there Fergusson's eye marked "the reverend dome" on the "gradual rising dale." There also a

tawdry signboard, on which were painted a man and a horse, with refreshments before them ; the man's, represented by an unshapely jug frothed with small beer, offended one taste, but courteously offered to gratify another. They accepted the offer of the legend over the inn doorway, but were content to "regale with sober can." They now set off at a rapid pace, for the day was declining, and covering in succession "hills, vales, and extensive plains"—to quote from the poem—found themselves at last, blown and breathless, in the ferry-boat at North Queensferry, where they could cool and come to. They crossed to the south side in "ten posting minutes," and marched at once to M'Laren's, where they ate an early supper of roast lamb and lettuce ; and as they felt the day's perils were now over, and they were now on the safe side of the water, they proposed to congratulate each other by cracking a bottle or two together. Accordingly the cheering glass went briskly round ; and by-and-by they proceeded to bumpers, having as their lawful excuse the toast of the ladies of their more particular regard. They journeyed leisurely towards Edinburgh in the cool of the long gloaming, and were surrounded on the way with a splendid sunset, which filled the north-western heavens, and was delicately reflected from the airy spires and cliffs of the capital. The glowing equipage had passed, and the steeds of the sun were stabled, and they were still "moving slowly on with festive joints and lingering pace." In short, it was night when they got into Edinburgh.

[An interesting account of the ferry passage between

Leith and Pettycur in the early years of last century will be found in the Appendix to *Major Fraser's Manuscript*, recently published by Mr David Douglas, who kindly brought it under my notice. The account is contained in a letter (of date 8th April 1715), and narrates the experiences of no less a personage than Duncan Forbes of Culloden, the future Lord President of the Court of Session.]



PART II.

OF OLD WORDS AND
FORGOTTEN WAYS.

POACHERS AND POACHING.

CONVENTIONAL usage has established a wide interval between poaching and bagging. Your fine gentleman with a turn for sport estimates his success in the field by the size of his bag ; vulgarity, on the other hand, surreptitiously crams his pouch, and is no sportsman, but a poacher. To the etymologist there is no difference between poaching and bagging : to him the words name the same identical actions. Neither is there any difference between the actions to the student of human nature : he sees in both the exercise of the same instinct. The difference that obtains is the creation of legal enactments, and is dependent upon the status of parties. It is therefore convenient to recognise it. Law has caught up the simple, homely, harmless word "poach" from the obscurity of rustic cottages and roadside alehouses, has branded it with a bad meaning, and perpetuated the disgrace by definition and a place in the statute-book. Poaching is illegal. It is known to be an offence against law to the most unenlightened pagan in our country : bloodshed and theft are not more certainly breaches of the law. But the immorality of it is a different question, which the rustic is at any time ready to debate. In his view it is by no mean an immutable and eternal Cudworthian wrong.

He has probably a glimmering knowledge of the historical origin of its criminality, and he cherishes a sure faith that after a certain day of some month in a year that is coming it will cease to be a crime. With that knowledge, and in this belief, he goes on poaching himself or conniving at its practice by others. Every young rustic you meet is a very possible poacher, if he is not something more. For the statement may be hazarded that poaching is as common now in the rural districts as it has been any time during the last fifty years or so. The professional poacher, it must be allowed, could hardly survive the Prevention Act of 1862. That Act gave the constable power to search persons suspected of illegally taking game; and it required every dealer to account for the game in his possession—to state where, when, and from whom he got it. These were merciless conditions of life to the man who made his livelihood by poaching. But the Act did not suppress the occasional poacher: it rather put him upon his mettle. He became warier. Poaching became more than ever a game of skill. It rose almost to the rank of a fine art. The policeman as well as the gamekeeper was now to be evaded; suspicion as well as capture-in-the-act was to be avoided; there could be no further dealings with carriers and cadgers, and only hazardous intercourse with licensed purchasers of game; and in 1870 the necessary payment of ten shillings for the use of a gun for a year made the rustic who ventured upon the luxury a marked man. Meanwhile there was one thing in the poacher's favour. At the same time that these arbitrary laws were being proclaimed against

him, a natural law was operating in some measure to his advantage. The rural population was decreasing obediently to the greater attractions of town life ; and, of course, the less peopled a district becomes, the better is the opportunity it offers for poaching.

The impulse to pursue and take or entrap wild animals is instinctive. So long as there are sportsmen there will be poachers—who are only a kind of unlicensed sportsmen. What makes the pursuit of game attractive to the peer appeals equally to the same instinct in the peasant. To the gratification of this instinct, his poverty is his only barrier. He refuses to recognise the immorality of its exercise. Poaching may be illegal : he does not regard it as sinful. Even the outcry of rustic respectability against it is not on the score of sin, but that it is exposed to bodily danger, induces the formation of irregular habits, leads to quarrels (the respectable poor are eminently peaceable), and is attended by, or productive of, other evils. It is the belief—quite a universal one among the common country folks—that there is no sin in poaching that makes that breach of the law the common practice it is, and still as common as it has been. The peasant argues that what is your property only while it is in your possession—that is, on your grounds or your estate—may be his when it comes his way ; and if you deny it to him in his own croft or kail-yard, or on the public road, or in the neutral elements of air or natural water, he will reserve to himself the right of reprisal to take it wherever and whenever he can conveniently do so. His thesis is that game is no true property. When a cow strays it is pounded ; nobody

pounds a hare ;—I have heard the illustration again and again in such roadside inns as come in anglers' ways. And still more iniquitous, he will tell you, is the law against poaching salmon. His practice has been so long in accordance with his argument that the substitution of a simple trespass law for the obnoxious game laws would now hardly avail to keep the honest poacher on his own side of the hedge. Within quite recent years the rustic mind has had its ideas on the subject of land-tenure very nearly revolutionised. The poacher has been among the foremost to express his satisfaction with the revolution. A humorous illustration of the new attitude of the poacher towards the land question was given not long ago in one of our county courts. Black Rab, a notorious poacher, was "had up," as he himself would have phrased it, "on the auld chairge." He was seen, it was alleged, breaking the law in the moonlight, was chased and escaped, leaving, however, his furs and feathers behind him. Next morning he was apprehended at his work—"blasting" in a quarry—and denied the charge. In court he not only pleaded "Not guilty," but protested with a vehemence he was never before known to show that "the keepers were mista'en i' their man this time—for he was sackless." He advanced an *alibi* that was not conclusive, and at last, at his wits' end, declared with genuine candour and a confidence that was clearly expected to convince, "In fac', it couldna hae been me, for it wasna *on my laund*!"

Hares, pheasants, and salmon are, as they have long been, the principal objects of the poacher's quest. To these add rabbits, now that they too are in the

game list, though the old opinion of them still lingers among the older peasantry that they are only a sort of ground vermin. This bad opinion of Bunny doubtless arose from his abundance, and his destructiveness to the young crops. Time was when even salmon was regarded by our farm-labourers as they now regard the cheap but wholesome herring, and when they made it a condition of their engagement to have it as an article of diet not oftener than three times a week. There is no prejudice against salmon now; there will soon be none against rabbit. But partridges, snipe, and wild ducks have also a good share of the poacher's attention. The physical features and capabilities of his district determine the nature of his quarry. One district is rich in hares, another swarms with pheasants; and of course all streams are not frequented by salmon. Fifty years ago the tenant-farmer offered little, if any, opposition to the poacher; he may be said to have encouraged him for keeping his lands free of destructive creatures that preyed upon his crops, and were sacred. Those were the days of unfenced fields. But now the trespass law is enforced because there are fences the breaking of which by accident or malice is a sore vexation equally to tenant and laird. The foot of the poacher may do small damage to the enclosed field, but the gap he leaves behind him in the fence, where the paling gave way under his weight, offers an easy inroad to untended sheep and more destructive cattle. The mischief they do to half-grown and ripening crops lies partly in what they devour; but they work greater havoc by trampling and breaking the promised harvest.

The best poaching grounds for a big bag are, of course, in and around preserves. The poacher's victims here are hares, pheasants, woodcocks, and partridges. Hills and lochs furnish snipe, grouse, and wild-duck. Here the chance of a big bag is not so great as there is much less density of game; but there is less likelihood of interruption to the poacher, even though his use of the gun is almost imperative. For personal safety he prefers the open, with such means of escape as the hills afford, to the uncertain cover of the wood. Indeed, the poacher seldom finds it to be either to his safety or his profit to visit the wood. He knows it is a poor place for hares comparatively with the fields adjoining, especially if there is an escape to uplands through whin-bushes and broom. Puss herself prefers the open to the woodland, making her form under the sky among bracken or long grass. Pheasants are the only true wood game, but they too can be taken beyond its boundaries. Of an October night they may be found by fifties feeding on the stubble-field.

The poacher's activity is little restrained by the popularity of the landlord. It is a simple question of personal proclivity and the game supply, into which consideration of the feelings of the most generous of landlords enters only theoretically. If such consideration ever affect the poacher's practice at all, it can only reveal itself by sparing the fences and making a cleaner—that is, a less evident—abstraction of the game. And in the ordinary intercourse of daily life the poacher has still an ingenuous “hat” for the landlord; it is only in rare cases that hatred of

the landlord gives additional zest to poaching. But the prime instinct which finds delight in circumventing the creatures of the wild may be reinforced by other means. Various collateral inducements operate to produce the poacher. Among these are poverty or want of work ; the love of adventure or "the fun of the thing ;" the influence of wild companions, or the opinion of the poaching community. In addition to these motives, the craving of palate and pocket must not be overlooked. Successful poaching furnishes the peasant with a very agreeable change in his rather monotonous dietary ; and it may supply him on occasion with a little ready money. The conversion of game by the poacher into the resourceful form of coin is now, however, a very risky transaction. Time was when eighteenpence for a hare or a shilling for a pair of rabbits was "found siller" at the dyke-side of a morning. The journeyman wheelwright or apprentice blacksmith had just to take a short "dander" at the breakfast-hour in the direction of a snare he had set overnight. If he knew his art at all, the money was at his feet, or what would be money at the side of the cadger's cart that forenoon. The cadger was just as eager to make the petty disbursement from his "stocking-foot" or leather pouch as the poacher was to take it. There was undisputed division of the value or profit between them—fifty per cent. to each. Seldom or never was there any higgling ; that might end in unseemly debate. Neither was the poacher so much at the mercy of the cadger as one might suppose. His refuge from cadger greed was to the competition of the carrier. He would play the

one off against the other without coming to the climax of an articulate difference with either.

While all classes of the working rural population included poachers, the crafts or employments that were pre-eminent some fifty years ago in sending them out were those of the blacksmith, the wright, the saddler, the shoemaker (the tailor belonged to a more timorous class), the roadman—who had special facilities for taking a pheasant or lifting a stray hare—the weaver, the small farmer, the field-worker, the ploughman, and the mason. The last-named was a daring and deadly enemy of the game in winter, when frost resisted the chisel and bound the plaster, and his only choice in spending the day was between idleset and poaching. There were also young lads of seventeen or so, who in winter divided their time between poaching and attending the parish school. There was often little work for such lads about the farms from Martinmas to Candlemas; and their fee as arranged at Candlemas was as big as if they fee'd from Martinmas. Even girls innocently engaged in tending kine could make shift to watch a conveniently-set snare. Poaching was by no means confined to the class of ne'er-do-weels. A douce elder of the Kirk would make no scruple to lift a hare from a "girn;" nor would the minister hesitate to eat it if, as sometimes happened, the carcass of puss found its way—semi-anonymously—to the manse kitchen. There were clever fellows among the poachers—not clever only at poaching, but at the various occupations to which they gave the regular hours of the day. Poaching was their pastime:

it came as a relief to the tedium of lawful industry.

In *Humphrey Clinker*, Smollett, in his own inimitable way, gives expression to the peasant's view of poaching in the correspondence of Squire Bramble. That worthy landlord writes from Clifton on the 17th April to his *fidus Achates* "dear Lewis":—

"As for Higgins, the fellow is a notorious poacher, to be sure, and an impudent rascal to set his snares in my paddock; but I suppose he thought he had some right, especially in my absence, to partake of what Nature seems to have intended for common use: you may threaten him in my name as much as you please; and, if he repeats the offence, let me know it before you have recourse to justice."

On the 20th he writes:—

"I had yesterday a visit from Higgins, who came hither under the terror of your threats, and brought me in a present a brace of hares, which he owned he took in my ground; and I could not persuade the fellow that he did wrong, or that I would ever prosecute him for poaching. I must desire you will wink hard at the practices of this rascallion, otherwise I shall be plagued with his presents, which cost me more than they are worth."

The poacher of fifty years ago might be relegated to one of three classes, according to the means he employed to entrap or take his quarry. He might make use of a dog, trained for the purpose—a collie (commonest of country dogs), or a wicked-eyed terrier, or the deadly lurcher, which to the speed of the greyhound adds the sagacity of terrier or collie,

and does its work without din. Or the poacher might put his trust in snares and nets. Or lastly, he might make service of a gun, kept in some outhouse, or secret place in the wilderness, or carried in three portions under a capacious coat to the scene of execution. Another division of the fraternity might be made into poachers who had no faith in partnership, poachers who hunted in couples, and poaching gangs loosely composed for special occasions. In the case of couples or gangs, one would sometimes be detailed to hold the gamekeeper, whose interference was dreaded, in talk at the crossways or at the alehouse, while his *confrères* were setting or examining the snares. A decayed poaching ne'er-do-weel was never entrusted with this commission; the keeper cold-shouldered such a one at once; but he would talk, not without suspicion, with a respectable lad, of whose intentions he was in some degree of doubt. Dogs and snares were employed to take hares (and rabbits); the gun overreached all kinds of four-footed and winged game. There were lines and leisters for the water. An experienced or well-taught poacher went about his work methodically, and in many instances had no mean knowledge of natural history. His first proceeding was to select a field for his operations. He knew that the hare when startled runs up or across the field. When at her ease, and enjoying the sense of security, Puss "hirples down the fur," as Burns observed one memorable Sunday morning. Gloaming was the usual time for setting snares; they were looked at in the morning; but sometimes, after the snare was quietly set, the dog was sent to scour the selected

field, and Puss was caught while the poachers waited. The snare was set about one yard from the "slap" of the hunting-field, and *outside* the field. A raid on rabbits was commonly conducted on an idle afternoon that favoured the use of dogs. A well-trained terrier, with the delight of sport glowing like a spot of fire in each—it might be in *one*—shaggy-browed eye, would invade the burrows in business-like style, while a "gash" collie hung on the skirts of the furzy knowe, and snapped up the scuttling fugitives. It was a game of hide-and-seek to the dogs, played on the definite principle of a division of labour. To poor Bunny it was something of a more tragic nature. It was the acme of sport to such young rustics as herd-boys, more especially if they were countenanced by the presence of the farmer's son, or the laird's. It was the apprenticeship of poaching. The herd pieced together his knowledge of the habits of game by watching the practice of gamekeepers. From recognised rabbit-killers he learnt the art of snare-setting.

The poacher had a special equipment to avoid detection. Its simplest form was the wearing of dark clothes. Desperate fellows wore a bandage of crape, or "coomed" their faces, or otherwise disguised their appearance. The tools of the night poacher were nets, guns, brass wires for the construction of snares, and a dog. He generally dispensed with a bag. Tying the feet of his quarry together, he flung the furry or plummy burden over his shoulder ; or he hid it near his house, probably in a byre, till he satisfied himself that the coast was clear. There were instances of the poacher

marching with his booty into his own house, and finding himself in the presence of "gamie," who had dropped in, troubled with suspicions of the inmates, but ostensibly on a social or even friendly visit. The smell of hair on the poacher fresh from the fields, and, it might be, a trace of hare's wool sticking here and there to his homespun coat, while hardly incriminating evidence, had the natural effect of confirming the gamekeeper's suspicion. Some rough-and-ready badinage would pass between them on the subject, but they would part with the ordinary courtesies at the door, each resolved to watch the other in future with increased circumspection.

To his acquaintance with natural history the practised poacher added the study of meteorology, topography, and of course human nature, as exhibited in his associates and his enemies. He would train his dog to carry a lamp on its forehead for dark nights, and to run up the furrow for partridges, driving the birds before it to his net on the head-rig. No hares were netted, as a rule, on a bright moonlight night. They scampered and played about over the fields like lambs; but on a dark fresh night with a wind blowing they kept their roads and ran into the snares. There was plenty of moonlight poaching with the gun. Watches were always set on moonlight nights. At those times the regular keepers were assisted by the rabbit-killer on the estate. Pheasants, unless well protected, were easily taken. The poacher, stepping warily in the plantation, with a half-muttered curse to some wake-rife cushat, and a long fearful pause when a rotten branch broke at his elbow with the report of

a pistol-shot, would presently come upon a cock, with three or four hens beside him, roosted half-way up an ordinary-sized larch or fir tree. Even on a darkish night, on looking up through the branches, he would make out their forms distinctly outlined against the sky. He had merely to put up his hand and pull them down, tragically stifling all noise with stealthy speed. They were half-tamed, and not soon scared, if their haunt was near the "Big House." The poacher, while he praised their plumpness, had a kind of pitiful contempt for their stupidity. If he was perilously near the Big House, and not many yards even from the bedroom window and lug of the laird, he might try to stupefy them, especially if high roosted, with the fumes of brimstone—"smeek them like bees," as he would say. But this had its own peril: they might only cough, and sneeze, and shift their perch in rather an alarming way. If the laird's window flew up, and a dog came crashing through the brushwood, there followed an exciting time for the baffled poacher.

The instinct of the true sportsman was sometimes shown by the poacher in his free distribution of his night's plunder. We knew an inveterate poacher, a most companionable rascal in many ways, who as often bestowed the fish, which he had painfully poached at midnight, among his poor neighbours, as bartered them with the cadger for brandy or a bladder of unexcised whisky. He would never take money, and would almost have starved rather than eaten fish. He discouraged poaching among the young, and would have no associate. His ordinary gift to a

master tradesman at New Year was a small sackful of fish, accompanied with a copy of the Shorter Catechism for each of his three apprentices. The gift was supposed to be anonymous, but it was an open secret that "Auld John" was the donor. He never went to Church, except at the summer sacrament time, when he took his seat in a front pew of the gallery, and looked down with pagan interest upon the mystery of the Communion as celebrated in the "laigh kirk." He showed his respect for religion by regularly doffing to the minister; and he was supposed to be the sender of an occasional very large fish, which mysteriously found its way by night to the manse porch, wrapped in the jacket of a cheap sporting newspaper. It was the newspaper—of which he was the only reader in the little community—that was believed to have betrayed him.

There was not wanting to the life of the poacher a strong dash of poetry. He had necessarily observant eyes, and a sensitiveness of perception which not seldom touched and stirred his feelings. Who of the denizens of the everyday realistic world had his opportunities of spying the wild shy graces of retiring Nature, surprising her in her hours of private abandon, or feeling her close presence in the chamber of midnight woods or cloud-curtained moors? Her dread beauty solemnised him for the moment. He was half daunted by the temerity of his own intrusion. He felt, as indeed he was, in a new world—lifted from the common world of daylight with its three conventional aspects of morning, noon, and evening, such as the respectable people of his hamlet knew

and believed to be exhaustive of Nature and the limit of her resources. How little they knew of the lofty majesty of moon-lighted heaven as seen, nay, as *felt*, from the dark depth of woods that swayed over him, and moaned with the oppression of sweet dreams! How little of the vocal gladness at rising morn of the leafy world of birds, that made him, with the savage leister in his hand, uncover where he stood waist-deep in the water, overpowered and overawed into something like pagan devotion by the clamorous praise of the plantation near him! "The wud was just *roarin'* wi' birds: I bude (*behoved*) to lift my bonnet to them," was the confession of a romantic poacher whose acquaintance in youth I dearly prized. And what did the non-poaching villagers know of the passion of wailing winds which was shrieked into the night wanderer's very heart, or of the despondency of rain-drenched hills whose gloom entered his soul, and was not to be dispelled by a back-ful of game or by many succeeding suns? They sat by their fireside comforts, and shut their doors and their eyes upon one (and the more impressive) half, the night half, of the world of Nature. In this world of natural poetry, to which he was passive but not insensible, the poacher was a ranger. But it was also to him a world of action, adventure, danger, and not seldom conflict with his fellow-men. It was thus fraught with the elements of both natural and human poetry. The poacher, however, kept his experiences of poetical thought, feeling, and situation to himself, or for favoured listeners in the evening of his life. His confessions, when made, were brief, almost half-

articulate. He never thought of elaboration, and was guiltless of the arts of metre and rhyme.

The gamekeeper's world was not quite the same as the poacher's. He too, doubtless, was familiar with the nocturnal aspects of rural and savage scenery, and maintained what might be called social relations with thought-suggestive solitude, but not under the same conditions, nor with the same degree of intimacy. Black summer storms of thunder, and the white terror of winter tempest, which invited the poacher, kept him for the most part within doors, or only drew him forth with reluctance. And in his case the element of personal danger, which gives vitality to feeling, and quickens the imagination, was comparatively a-wanting. The gamekeeper ran little risk, except in collision with desperate poachers. On his side was the sense of security arising from the discharge of legal duty. He had nothing to win; his task was to preserve. He acted on the defensive. It was his duty, rather than love of the work, which sent him out to danger or to storm. And he was himself under the surveillance of the laird, who laid little schemes to test his attentiveness and fidelity. The laird would discharge a pistol at a late hour in some nook of his preserves, as if playing at being poacher, and would await the result, or interrogate the keeper next morning as to his whereabouts at the time of the report.

The humours of poaching have never been related, and would fill a book. These could not flourish in all circumstances. They require for their growth a humanity or softness of heart on the laird's part, and the absence of malice on the poacher's. The mutual

relations were almost friendly. They were tacitly maintained on the principle that he might take who had the skill, and he should keep who could. It was a game, rigorously conducted within certain limits, in which laird and poacher set themselves to outwit each other. Admiration was frankly expressed by the baffled party when the one stole a march on the other. Tam Mackinlay's testimony may be quoted here. Poaching was a passion with Tam. Poesy was not more a passion with Goldsmith. And, like the poet, Tam indulged it for its own sake, reckless of personal or domestic consequences. He made the same regretful confession as Goldsmith, and almost in the same words—

“It found him poor at first, and kept him so.”

On one occasion the gamekeeper rose from behind a bush as Tam was lifting a hare. “Ye’ve grippit me this time, Patie?” “Will ye tak’ wi’ ’t, then?” asked the keeper. “I maun,” said Tam, and walked off home disconsolately. On the way to his cottage he acquainted the blacksmith with his misfortune. “Up to the laird at aince!” counselled Burn-the-win,’ “afore the keeper gets word o’ him.” “It’s a sair punishment, whatever way,” said Tam; “but it’s maybe the best plan.” Tam washed his face, and tying a black silk neckerchief round his bare throat to show his respect for the laird, walked in his rags—he had no choice between them and nudity—up to the house, and gravely informed the laird that he was ‘grippit.’ The laird eyed him severely, but was

secretly touched at the sight of Tam's rags. He read him a stern lecture, in the course of which he referred to the evil example he was setting his family. "And you have a large family, I hear?" "Seeven," said Tam. The laird expressed indignation. "Do you know," demanded the laird, to whom the estate had come late, and much burdened with debt; "Do you know that *I* must be a bachelor?" "Weel, laird," said Tam demurely, "I'm sure it's no' the women's faut!" The remark seemed to please the laird. He wound up by asking Tam if he would be a game-keeper. Tam refused, vouchsafing no reason but that "he dootit he couldna." The laird thought him diffident of his own ability for the post. "You know the estate, and you know the game, and you know what your duties would be." "A' true," said Tam thoughtfully; "an' as for the estate—I ken it, maybe, better than yersel, laird! But I canna see my way to be a keeper. Na, I canna do 't!" Whereupon the laird dismissed him "for a blind stirk," but with a pardon, the last he would get, and—a terrible warning. Within a couple of months Tam was again taken red-handed. He tried the same tactics of an interview with the laird previous to the report of the keeper. To his astonishment the laird subjected him to a shorter and less severe scolding than on the previous occasion, and let him go! Long afterwards, when age and rheumatics combined to curb Tam's poaching impulses, and he had removed to a distant parish, it transpired that his refusal of the laird's offer was like the Provost of Dumfermline's when he was obliged to decline an invitation to banquet with the

Lord Mayor of London—it was owing to his “want o’ claes!” “I had naething but the rags I wrocht in,” said the simple fellow; “I wudda (*should have*) been a disgrace to the laird’s toun.”

Nick Peetrie was another poaching humorist, not of the broad, genial, almost boyish type to which Tam Mackinlay belonged, but dry, tart, and taciturn. Tam was really large-hearted, with a giant’s strength and a big body to house it; Nick, on the other hand, was short and shrivelled, close-minded, and, if his heart was sound at the kernel, it was only known to the few who managed to get to it. He walked with stooping shoulders and shambling legs, had a peculiar habit of sniffing at short intervals, and peered rather than looked from under the shadow of bushy grey eyebrows. He was a crofter, or small farmer, with about thirty acres on his hand, and lived in a thatched hut like a bee-hive on a lonely brae-side. The brae was rough with furze and stunted birch, and, nearer his homestead, a bush of boor-tree, as a defence from witches; while a bickering burn stirred tall green dockens and floury meadow-sweet at the brae-foot. Nick was known to be a smuggler of whisky of his own distilling, and was shrewdly suspected of relieving his more regular employment with a little poaching. As a smuggler he had made acquaintance with the county jail, but he was never convicted of poaching. He was by his own account nearly caught several times: once in the dusk of a summer evening, when his eldest son, a boy of thirteen, was with him. On that occasion, giving his son hurried instructions to “keep sooth” (south), he boldly cut across country,

making northward for a distant wood, and was long but ineffectually followed by the gamekeeper. At the fair of the county town, about a week afterwards, Nick met his enemy, and asked "Whether he had gotten his wind again?" The keeper stared in some bewilderment. "I heard ye had lost it," said Nick, sniffing, and passing on with the air of a man who had been misinformed.

Watty Tod was another humorist of the class, but his humour, like that of ancient Æsop, played round the beasts of the field. He used to report colloquies with the hare, in which there was revealed an eye for dramatic situation, as well as such a characterisation of the creature as indicated a perfect knowledge of its ways and its nature. But the charm of those colloquies lay in Watty's recital. He anticipated by a quarter of a century Uncle Remus's amusing narratives of "Brer" rabbit and his kinsfolk.

Dave Johnson's humour arose from his relations with the jailer. Dave was one of the most persistent and unlucky of poachers. Scarcely a season passed but he was convicted and imprisoned. His experiences of jail-life were disclosed with the utmost frankness. What he most dreaded in imprisonment was the scanty fare of the jail. One of his disclosed secrets was the dinner menu; every urchin in the village knew it: "Two ounce of beef, or four ounce of a marry-bone!" Dave regarded poaching as the most natural thing in the world. "I wad advise ye a', lads," he would say to a knot of sympathising weavers, "no' to find faut wi' the jailer about your breakfast. If ye anger him, he stirs the parritch a' owre the pat-bottom

afore cowpin' them, an' what doesna fa' at ance is carried aff i' the pat. There's no a spunefu' on your plate—an' ye've gotten your allo'ance!"

Poaching had its tragic side. Every district had its tale of manslaughter, and there were even instances of downright premeditated murder. These, of course, got into the public prints, and townspeople with little knowledge of the country formed their ideas of poachers from the newspaper record of poaching. They regarded all poachers as professional criminals of the most dangerous type. They were believed to be to the country what burglars and garroters were to the cities. There can be no doubt that in too many instances poaching, commenced in frolic by careless country lads fond of adventure, ended in a life of crime. It was often but a step from the pheasant-preserves to the hen-roost. The man that was at first content with a hare was occasionally found to covet a sheep. Poaching, especially when accompanied with a sense of lost reputation, and—which was usually the case—influenced by the allurements of the alehouse, placed the moral principle in deadly peril. It ruined many a young ardent life. It began by unsettling the habits of early home-training; it produced unsteadiness at regular employment; it sometimes required flight from the locality to avoid a conviction that would bring, not merely personal, but family disgrace. If the young apprentice or journeyman stayed to face and answer an accusation, it was to brazen out his conduct, to lose his good name with the law-abiding community, to drop into evil company, to vex or ruin the hopes of sister or sweetheart; then, with lost

character, came recklessness and a red coat. In some instances the army reformed him, and he returned to rural life respectable and respected. The character of Adam Mercer in Norman Macleod's famous story of "The Starling" is drawn with sympathetic knowledge of this class of poacher; it might have been—it probably was—drawn from the life. Black Ned, as drawn by Scott with the pencil of Crabbe, furnishes the contrast:—

"Approach, and through the unlatticed window peep—
Nay, shrink not back, the inmate is asleep;
Yes, stupefied by toil and drugged by gin,
The body sleeps: the restless guest within
Now plies in wood and wild his lawless trade,
Now in the fangs of justice wakes dismay'd!
Was that wild start of terror and despair,
Those bursting eyeballs and that 'wildered air,
Signs of compunction for a murdered hare?
Do the locks bristle and the eyebrows arch
For grouse or partridge massacred in March?

"Wild howled the wind the forest glades along,
And oft the owl renewed her dismal song,
The wading moon with storm-presaging gleam
Now gave and now withheld her doubtful beam,
The old oak stooped his arms, then flung them high,
Bellowing and groaning to the troubled sky:
'Twas then that, couched among the brushwood sere,
In Malwood-walk young Mansel watched the deer;
The fattest buck received his deadly shot,—
The wakeful keeper heard, and sought the spot;
Stout were their hearts, and stubborn was their strife;
O'erpowered, at length the outlaw drew his knife!
Next morn a corpse was found upon the fell—
The rest his waking agony may tell."

The chance of such a fate, if tradition be "an honest woman of her word," was at one time young Will Shakespeare's. Thank heaven! he ran off to London, and became a play-actor.

THE NORTH SEA SCHEME.

A CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF THE HERRING FISHERIES OF SCOTLAND.

"The Herring loves the merry moonlight,
The Mackerel loves the wind ;
But the Oyster loves the dredging sang,
For she comes of a gentle kind."—*Scott.*

IN the very year 1720, when the bubble of the South Sea Scheme was dazzling and delighting England, a joint-stock company in canny Scotland proposed a North Sea Scheme which, while it promised less visionary and immediate wealth to its supporters, gave good assurance of what was called in the language of the time a "prospect of plenty" to its promoters and of prosperity to the nation at large. The aim of the North Sea Scheme was to revive and develop the herring fishery of the Scottish coasts. A principal part of the object was to extend the fishing industry more fully along the western coasts, which were, and long continued to be, credited with a prolific variety of fish, especially herring, of phenomenally fine quality. Shares of £100 each were put upon the market, and, although the venture was despised as mean and paltry by the infatuated supporters of the

South Sea craze, two thousand names of the wealthier and more enterprising people of the country speedily appeared on the list of shareholders. According to a contemporary authority, as large a sum as two millions sterling seems to have been subscribed—a pretty conclusive proof that the nation was by no means bankrupt by the failure of the Darian project in the preceding generation. Several ships were at once commissioned for the instant prosecution of the industry: experienced skippers and fishermen were engaged; and a shipment of salt and barrels, and other necessities for the purpose of preserving the expected spoils of ocean, was already actually on board.

It was never denied that, as the Scottish rivers and lochs abounded, these in pike and those in trout and salmon, so the Scottish seas swarmed at recurring seasons with herring, cod, the sea cat, tusk, and ling. Salmon, as a food for the peasantry, was so plentiful as to be at a discount, and ploughmen in some parts of the country bargained with their employers against being fed on continual salmon.* From Lochleven alone, and in regard to only one species of its fishy produce, an annual supply of eight casks of salted eels used to be—some three centuries ago—part of the feu mail of the Bishopshire to the Archbishop of St Andrews. There can hardly be a doubt that the taking of fish

* "Plenty of salmon in Herefordshire" (writes quaint old Thomas Fuller in his *Natural Commodities*); "though not in such abundance as in Scotland, where servants, they say, indent with their masters not to be fed therewith above thrice a week." Scotland was known as *Scotia Piscinata*.

was greatly promoted by the laws of the Church, which previously to the Reformation required during the prescribed periods of fast-days and fastings an abstinence from flesh foods, but conceded the indulgence in fish. It is curious to notice that neither clerical law nor example could recommend the eel to the Scottish lay palate. The stores of maritime fish, especially on the east coast, were equally well known, both from their neighbourhood to the burrows-touns, which gladly consumed them as an agreeable variety of diet, and from the fleets of foreign busses or fishing boats which they attracted to our shores. Every Edinburgh burgess was aware of the wealth of the Firth of Forth long before Fergusson set himself to celebrate in euphonious verse the extent and variety of the fish of that noble and spacious water:—

“In her the skate and codlin’ sail,
The eel, fu’ souple, wags his tail,
Wi’ herrin’, fluke, and mackerel,
And whitins dainty;
Their spindle shanks the lobsters trail,
Wi’ partans plenty.”

And generations before the North Sea Scheme was launched—

“At Musselbrugh, and eke Newhaven,
The fisherwives got tip-top livin’
When lads gaed oot on Sundays’ even
To treat their joes,
And tuke o’ fat pandores a prievin’,
Or mussel brose.”

In the seventeenth century, however earlier, the herrings of the West Coast found their way in barrels

to the towns in the south and east of the country. Lochs Broom and Fin were already famous as fishing waters ; and a keg of Lochfyne herrings was in 1720 no unacceptable compliment to an Edinburgh tradesman. Such a compliment was paid to Allan Ramsay, the Poet-Laureate of the Lowlands, by his brother rhymers, Lieutenant Hamilton of Gilbertfield, and duly, heartily, and appropriately acknowledged—

“ Your herrings, Sir, cam hale an’ fier
In halesome brine a’ soomin’ ;
Fu’ fat they are, and gusty gear
As e’er I laid a thoom on ;
Braw sappy fish as ane could wish
To clap on fadge or scon ;
They relish fine gude claret wine,
That gars oor cares stand yon’.”

But while the nation was content to own those productive seas, and take an occasional taste of their tribute, it seemed also to be content that the fish harvest should go to the patient and plodding industry of the Dutch. The Firth of Forth especially was a favourite resort of Mynheer. He kept on good terms with the numerous villages of the Fife and Lothian coasts by sharing with them the gains of a little judicious smuggling ; but his main advantage, though the Scots were long in realising it, lay in the great takes of fish of which, every season and almost the whole year round, he despoiled the Scottish waters. It was no business of his—it was certainly no loss to him—if the Scots remained comparatively inactive while he had the run of the Scottish fisheries ; he was hardly the man to boast of the profits he secured through their laziness, or to enlighten them at his own expense.

They could only gauge his success by the number of his boats and the frequency of his visits. It is a wonder they were so long "supine," as Ramsay puts it, in a business which was well calculated to employ their energies, but at last they began to open both their eyes, and to see with them in a way they had never before realised—the immense productivity in fish of their firths and narrow seas, and the gainful rapacity of the enterprising Dutch. The political history of the country at the time of the Revolution casts an incidental light upon Dutch enterprise in the Firth of Forth. In 1689 an officer of Mackay's, a Lieutenant Ramsay, was in Edinburgh with an auxiliary force, which he was under orders to convey with all possible expedition northwards against Dundee. He was about to cross the Firth at the Ferry when the appearance of a fleet of vessels arrested his attention and his progress. He took them for a French squadron come in aid of the Stuarts, and was rather relieved than delighted when he by-and-by learned that the vessels were Dutch busses engaged in the peaceful peculation of Scottish herring. They were no unfamiliar sight from the shores of Fife or the Lothians, but they had come on this occasion at an unexpected time, and besides, the lieutenant doubtless thought he did right to be wary. It was, however, before the year of the Revolution that the Scots recognised, from Dutch example, the vast unappropriated wealth that lay in fish at their own doors; and the herring fisheries had already been made a subject of legislation when, in 1696, the famous Darien Company—which chiefly erred by being too

ambitious all at once—considered the matter as possibly furnishing a rich source of supplies for their projected emporium of miscellaneous goods. It was even proposed by the Company to establish markets, for the sale of herrings caught in Scottish waters, at places so far remote as Archangel and the Gold Coast; but that proposal, it needs no telling, shared in the collapse of the Darien enterprise, and came to naught, and the Scottish herring and other fisheries remained, more even than they had been before,

“A toom dominion on the plenteous main,
Whence others ran away with all the gain.”

This state of things seemed on the eve of a change for the better on the formation of the North Sea Scheme in 1720. To “ding the Dutch,” and secure their own fish for their own maws, was now the great aim and end of Scottish maritime enterprise. There were not wanting objectors to the scheme, men whose independency was not strong enough to do without the countenance of Court favour, and whose suspicions of Southron jealousy read failure in every purely Scottish enterprise. Others were afraid of what the Dutch might do if their monopoly of the Scottish fisheries should be threatened. These willingly confessed—how could they deny?—the enormous gains which Holland secured from the monopoly; it was even allowed that that country fished more riches out of the “Pictland seas” than it ever made by trafficking with both the Indies. But the very fact of such vast profits, they argued, would incite the Dutch to thwart the Scottish scheme, and their enormous wealth would

be used to the last stiver before they surrendered their hopes of a perpetual harvest which they had come by long usage to regard as rightfully their own. The question, besides, had a political aspect, and it would not do to fall out with such powerful political allies, even though the price of their friendship should be a monopoly of the Scottish fisheries. To these objections it was opposed that English rivalry need not be mistaken for English jealousy; that, as there were no longer separate interests, the ancient kingdoms, joined in 1707 like man and wife, should study each other's peace and prosperity; and that the surest means of making the Union an actual fact was to institute a community of gain, and

“Weave and fish to ane anither's hands,
And never think wha serves and wha commands.”

As for the Dutch, they would think twice before they broke the political alliance into which they had entered with Britain—a nation so powerful that it could with ease updraw every sluice in the Netherlands, and drown the inhabitants behind the security of their own dykes. There was reason, law, and nature on the side of the scheme. The future of Scotland, in the happy event of the scheme being carried, was painted in glowing prospectuses. In the first place, a much-desiderated impetus would be given to the boat-building trade; thousands, half the nation even—“with spirits only tint for want of work”—would find a new outlet for their energies in manning the fishing fleets, and in curing for home and foreign markets the food that was lost in the seas. Then

wealth would pour into impoverished Scotland ; the population would increase with the establishment of comfortable homes ; braw towns would rise with steeples and stone houses of ashlar work

“ Alang wild shores where tumbling billows break,
Plenish’d wi’ nocht but shells and tangle wreck.”

Landlords would participate indirectly in the national gain, and would utilise their wealth by recovering waste lands, and improving what was already productive—nerved to the work by the faith of a tenfold return for their toil and outlay. The scheme, in short, was to set Britain on her feet. Scottish herrings were to maintain the nations—Goths and Vandals, Moors and Frenchmen,

“ The ranting Germans, Russians, and the Poles
Shall feast with pleasure on our gusty shoals ;
For which, deep in their treasures we shall dive :
Thus by fair trading North Sea Stock shall thrive.”

There would be absolutely no need for us to toil or traffic on foreign shores, with both the Indies lying just beside us :

“ Yet, *for diversion*, laden vessels may
To far-off nations cut their liquid way,
An’ fetch fra’ ilka port what’s nice or braw,
While, for these trifles, we maintain them a’.”

It is sad to think that all those beautiful hopes were blasted, while they were yet fresh, by a frost the origin and nature of which belongs to the social and political history of those times ; and that the North Sea Scheme shortly proved as veritable a bubble as that of the South Sea, both bursting before the national gaze about the same time.

CONCERNING SKINK.

A HUNDRED years ago "skink" was still a current word in Scottish country speech. It is probably now in every nook and cranny of the ancient kingdom, and even among old people, a word obsolete and all but unintelligible. Pronounce it in the hearing of an old-world rustic, and he will need a minute's reflection to attach to the sound its meaning. To readers of Burns, who know the word with only a vague idea of its true signification, it brings with it a notorious unsavoury association—the result of a misprint, probably a blundering correction, in one of the editions, or rather impressions, of the famous poems published in Edinburgh in 1787. Yet it is an innocent enough word, ill-deserving to suffer from the vile companionship into which it was wickedly or stupidly thrust. There can be no reasonable doubt that Burns wrote "skinking" in the well-known address "To a Haggis." Documentary evidence apart, the context requires a word with the meaning of "skinking." The contrast drawn by the poet is between thin liquid fare, such as is favoured by foreigners, and the solid and substantial home haggis.

"Auld Scotland wants nae skinking ware,
 That jaups in luggies :
 But, if ye wish her gratefu' pray'r,
 Gie her a haggis !"

In this quotation the second line is explanatory of "skinking"—it is the bard's own gloss on the word.

It is to be noticed that Burns is not here depreciating any national dish in order to assert the superior claim of the chieftain of puddings. "Skinking ware" is not skink ; it is a Scottish rustic's name for some unmentionable French or Italian cat-lap. Skink itself was a good old Scottish dish, still called for, but not by that name. It was a species of soup, or rather broth, of unusual strength, made from the *shank* or shin of an ox. John Barleycorn may, or may not, have been an ingredient, but it is certain that Burns sings the praises of a very near relation of skink's incidentally in his eulogium of "Scotch Drink :"—

"On thee aft Scotland chows her cood
 In souple scones, the wale o' food ;
Or tumblin' in the boiling flood
 Wi' kail an' beef ;
 But when thou pours thy strong heart's blood,
 There thou shines chief."

Perhaps the most exhaustive enumeration of old Scottish dishes outside a cookery book is to be found in the joyous rant attributed (I think correctly) to the youngest of the three Sempills, and generally known from the first line as "Fy, let us a' to the Bridal." Haggis is, of course, in the list ; and skink holds an honourable place. From the way in which it is mentioned one may infer that it was a favourite

dish, likely to be indulged in to excess. Here is part of the *menu* card prepared for Jockey's wedding :

"There will be partans and buckies,
Speldens and haddocks eneu,
An' singit sheep-heids an' a haggize,
An' scadlips to sup till ye're fou."

Scadlips, a kind of fat soup, was well named, for it retained its pot heat, from its very nature, long after it ceased to send up an appetising steam. But it would need Meg Dods herself to differentiate it from powsowdie and skink.

"There will be good lapper'd-milk kebbucks,
An' sowens, an' farles, an' baps,
An' swats, an' clean-scrapit paunches,
An' brandie in stoups and in caps.
And there will be meal-kail an' castocks,
And *skink* to sup till ye rive,
An' roasts, to roast on a brander,
Of flouks that were taken alive."

Skink was not confined to Scotland. It is a good old English word, not uncommon in Chaucer, though it was never probably applied as a name to soup in the southern kingdom. "To skink" was to draw and serve ale or wine, and Shakespeare refers to the waiters and pot-boys of Eastcheap as "skinkers." They were probably so called from drawing the liquor through a pipe, which resembles a hollow shank-bone. Dr Skeat favours this derivation.

It would seem as if "skink," in its southern form of "schenche," was used for liquor; at least it was customary in old London, as set forth in Riley's *Memorials*, to have the "none-schenche," or "noon-

skink," as duly as the shopkeepers and lawyers of old Edinburgh had their mid-day dram of strong waters on the stroke of the "gill-bells" of St Giles'. It is curious to note the somewhat disguised survival of "none schenche" in the modern word "nuncheon." Properly speaking, nuncheon is a drink at mid-day; but we have confounded the word with luncheon, both in sound and in signification.

It seems that in at least one edition of Burns's poems the line in the haggis poem, which, correctly given, runs—

"Auld Scotland wants nae skinking ware,"
is made to read—

"Auld Scotland wants nae skinkling ware."

Here, though "skinkling" is a good old Scotch word, it has no point. It means "sparkling;" as a noun, "a small portion." In the former sense it is used by Burns in a poem—sometimes, but surely absurdly, denied to him—on "Pastoral Poetry:"—

"But thee, Theocritus, wha matches?
They're no' herds' ballats, Maro's catches;
Squire Pope but busks his *skinklin'* patches
O' heathen tatters."

The reference is to Pope's artificial pastorals in the classical style of ancient Rome.

THE LOTMAN.

“ See him sweating o’er his bread
Before he eats it.”—*The Task*.

THE entirely primitive occupation of the lotman only went out of fashion at the opening of the current century, and his name, ceasing to be used, is already all but forgotten. The lotman was the thresher, and he was to be found erewhile on every farm of the Lowlands. It was a small farm that employed but one. A farm that was worked by four pairs of horses required the services of two pairs of threshers. They were named “lotmen” from taking the stuff *by lot*—at so much per boll, the custom of the country-side regulating their charge. The phrase is still common: farm produce—chiefly potatoes, but even corn also—is still sold “in lots to suit purchasers.” Though he thus worked by the piece, the lotman’s time was not at his own making: if a farmer wanted a stack threshed—(“taken in,” as it was called, *i.e.* to the barn from the yard)—he wanted it done within a given limit; and the lotman had often to work extra hours. He was occasionally the first astir on the farm, in order to provide the necessary supply of straw for the day. In the case of a small farm or large croft, where the threshing was done by a member of the family, or, it

might be, a fee'd servant, it was often the practice to make provision for the day's use by threshing a few sheaves—or rather “thraves”—every morning. Mossgiel, as leased by the brothers Burns, was such a farm. It extended to a hundred and twenty acres, was worked by two pairs of horses—the very natures of which are on record: witness “the red-wud Kilburnie blastie”—and was managed by Gilbert and “three mischievous boys” serving under the poet's superintendence. The three farm lads were

“ A gadsman ane, a thresher t'ither,
Wee Davoc hauds the nowt in fother.”

The thresher here alluded to was not a lotman but a fee'd servant, whose first and perhaps principal duty on the farm was to keep the “town” supplied with straw and corn. The poet occasionally helped him, especially when farm-work of other kind was “at a stand.” We know of at least one hard day's work at threshing in the barn at Mossgiel in the winter of 1785-86, when Burns toiled like a brownie, and had his reward in tired body and depressed spirits, followed by a glorious *Vision* in the evening:—

“The thresher's weary flingin'-tree
The lee-lang day had tirèd me;
And when the day had closed his e'e
Far i' the west,
Ben i' the spence, right pensivelie,
I gaed to rest.”

On a big farm the lotman's work of threshing went on regularly from daylight to dark, and often both before the one and after the other by lantern light, during the whole of the winter. “Dichting” by means

of fanners went on, of course, at the same time. In his *Farmer's Ingle* (scene—East of Fife, near St. Andrews) Fergusson very properly conjoins the two occupations. It is "grey gloamin'" of a November day about the year 1770

"When Thresher John, sair dung, his barn-door steeks,
And lusty lasses at the dichtin' tire."

These lotmen were not farm-servants in the ordinary sense. They had probably been ploughmen, but stiffened with exposure or matrimony, had taken to threshing. When a ploughman married, and was not fortunate enough to secure the dignity of a foremanship, he thought of a more independent way of living, and when the chance occurred caught at the kind of work implied in the occupation of a lotman. It had many advantages, which either escaped the eye of the "single" ploughman, or were ignored by him in a kind of bravado. There was, for example, less exposure to "wind and weet," less of that kind of toil called "trudging," less "drudging" also at a variety of incidental duties; and if wages were not on a much more liberal scale than a ploughman's, payment was made at shorter and more convenient intervals. The lotman's house was in most cases a cottage by the roadside; but he might be a denizen of a town, probably near the outskirts, going out to his work at the farm in the morning and returning home in the evening. The Pleasance of Edinburgh used to be, and may still be, the home of many people who earned at least part of their livelihood by "day's work" among the neighbouring farms.

In summer time the lotman changed his name with the necessity of a change in his occupation. He was then known as an "orra man"—one who turned his hand to any work that was "going about." He became a ditcher or a drainer, mended roads, or repaired fences. Sometimes the farmer for whom he had "threshed the barn" in winter found him occupation in working his "faugh land"—as a field lying in summer fallow was called. This he did by cleaning it of weeds and stones, ploughing or "stirring" it, draining its sour hollows, and generally preparing it for next season. Potato-growing has made summer fallow less necessary. Clearing or "redding out" ditches was work done in the heat of summer, between the hay-making and the grain harvest. Draining was winter work chiefly. Burns's famous *Cotter* filled just such a position, and discharged just such services to the farmers in his neighbourhood as our lotman. Spades, mattocks, and hoes were the emblems of his toil, and he was doubtless no stranger to the use of the flail.

Flail, though a word of French origin, was the name by which the thresher's tool was most generally known. There was no absolute want of a native name; but probably "the swinging tree," though well descriptive of the thing it named, was confined to the west country. The instrument consisted of three parts: the handle or staff, the "souple," and the "couplins." The last-mentioned were thongs of eel-skin or leather, by which the souple was loosely fastened to the staff. Eel-skin, as being tougher and more lasting than leather, was preferred. It was in its way a

special industry in some rural districts to catch and skin those eels that were destined to flourish in a barn. There was a decided prejudice against them as food : Jews could not have held them in greater abomination. The souple, like the handle, was round, made like it of ash or elm, but thicker. It was swung over the head, and delivered in such a manner that the whole length of the souple fell prone at once on the prostrate sheaf. A novice who had courage to venture a full swing as likely as not brought the whole barn about his ears, or—which was the same thing—landed himself a swinging blow on the chops. Yes ; it was one of the fine arts to handle the flail as it deserved, and the art could not be painlessly learned in a day.

The lotman threshed the whole length of the sheaf, but especially, of course, the “ crop ” or the “ heads,” as the ears were commonly called. It was not only that some ears were in the body of the sheaf, but the cornstalks made better fodder for being bruised and broken. The threshing was done in the barn between the fore and back doors, which were both kept open, at least the upper halves, to admit light. The lower halves were closed in stormy weather. The threshers were stripped to the shirt, but were of course out of the draught and quite within the barn. They worked opposite each other on the same stuff when they worked in pairs. The flails fell alternately with steady thump on the grain lying in the cross-lights between the two doors. When sufficiently beaten on one side, the sheaf of course was turned. The barn floor was commonly of clay, but in most instances that part of

it on which the corn was threshed was laid with wood.

Another way of separating seeds from stalk than by threshing was by whipping. By this process handfuls of the sheaves were smartly struck upon a large cross-tree or beam fixed in the barn, and in such a way that only the ears were shaken. The stalks remained unbroken, and were serviceable for thatching.

Threshing-mills began to come into general use pretty early in the century. There was opposition to them at first, just as a century previously there had been opposition to fanners. (Mause Headrigg's objection to them may be in the reader's memory.) But when their superiority to the flail as a money-saving agency was established their introduction became general and rapid. An old farmer of my acquaintance ventured £24 for a "second-hand" mill, and declared he saved the cost of it the first year. As late as 1832-33 the flail was still thumping with its first vigour on upland farms on the Ochils. Even yet in some crofter's barn the old-world implement fitfully smites the corn. These eyes saw it last wielded—not many years ago—by an old man on his knees. It is now almost entirely confined to the beating of carpets and the care of antiquarian collections.

In Andrew Meikle's invention the loosened sheaf is operated upon by the beaters of a revolving drum. The difference between the flail and his threshing-mill is the difference between the oar and the steam paddle-wheel. Meikle's machine was invented in 1787; by the year 1830 most farms, even in outlying regions had a Meikle mill at one end of the barn.

The motive power was at first that of horses. They turned the vertical shaft in a round red-tiled shed in the rear of the barn. These conical sheds are still conspicuous on many farm towns. But they have mostly fallen into decay through disuse: the idle and rotting beams which they protected may be dimly seen through the openings in the low walls; a nearer inspection reveals a tapestry of mould and "mouse-webs" filling the angles, and extending along the beams to which, in old-world days of this century, Bob, and Dick, and Demsel were yoked. The endless recurrence of their white and brown and black hides in the shed opening, as they pursued their monotonous round to the hushing hum within the barn, is no longer one of the sleepy emblems of rural life. The principle of Meikle's mill is still employed in the travelling mills which, drawn and worked by steam-engines, now perambulate the country from stackyard to stackyard, and supersede in their turn the mill in the barn-end and the sorely-tried energies of Bob and Demsel and Dick.

ON A DISPUTED PASSAGE IN HOGG'S "KILMENY."

It is greatly to be feared that the poetry of the Ettrick Shepherd is not so much read or sung as it used to be. Hogg, indeed, is in danger of being neglected. His full meed of fame was in the palmy days of John Wilson and *Blackwood*. Thanks to Christopher North, the whole country was kept ringing with his name. And well did he merit his reputation. Whether we consider its bulk, its variety, or its sweetness, the poetry of Hogg approves him still a man of remarkable genius. Neglected he may be—but only for a while. He is of the immortals, and will rise again. Can "Kilmeny" ever be forgotten? In a recent number of *Blackwood* a young critic, writing timidly of the robustest spirit in Scottish literature—Burns hardly excepted—is courageous enough to speak of "The Thrissil and the Rois" as a very gem of poesy, unmatched in northern poetry. It *is* a gem, and perfect of its kind; and William Dunbar's fame would be appreciably dimmer for want of it. But it is not the hooded laureate's most brilliant achievement; and it is not quite so unmatched in refinement of feeling and daintiness of workmanship as Mr Oliphant imagines. I shall put "Kilmeny" beside it—though I should not be so unjust as to place Hogg beside Dunbar—and

without deciding between the two poems, I boldly prophesy that time, which, in the words of Pope, has spared the Thistle and the Rose, will as certainly cherish bonny Kilmeny.

The poem has its faults—especially to an Englisher. What—even though he be skilled in his Chaucer—what can he make of the spelling? What can he make of the *guhans* and the *guhairs*, the *ciris* and the *ayries*, not to mention the *hiches* and the *cuches*, and other perfectly innocent English words, sheep in wolves' clothing? The Scottish words, needless to say, are yet more ferocious. Hogg has not improved his beautiful poem by so ungracious a setting. It is not the antique form, but a mongrel mixture of that and phonetics. The illusion of an occasional antique word is not to be despised. The effect, indeed, is often marvellous. But a sparing use—a “daimen icker to the thrave”—would have quite sufficed. He is also now and then obscure, with an obscurity arising mostly from his love of the modern antique, from his presentation of an obsolete word in an “original” dress. Take a few lines, charged with a fine flavour of the supernatural, in illustration:—

“In yond greinwudde there is a waike,
And in that waike there is a wene,
And in that wene there is a maike
That nouthar has flesh, bluid, nor bene :
And dune in yon greinwudd he walkis his lene.”

“Waike” and “wene” and “maike” are not words of everyday occurrence. How many that read and admire the passage know quite what the words mean? The general reader is probably content with the general

meaning, which is sufficiently apprehensible, and frankly avows his ignorance beyond that. He may remark that it reminds him of the rhyme about the drap that was in the caup that was in the kist on Tintock-tap; but while in the latter case the individual words of an obscure rhyme are clearly intelligible, in the former the individual words of a clear enough passage are obscure. These obscure words, specified above, have been the subject of much misapplied comment, and the various interpretations, more numerous than one would suppose, and at times absurdly contradictory, throw a delightful confusion around the precise meaning of the words. It would serve no good purpose to quote those interpretations here. It is proposed rather to offer what is, so far as it goes, a correct interpretation. In the first place, there can be no doubt that "wene" is Hogg's form of the good old word "wane" or "wonne." "Wane" is the spelling in Henryson's fine poem, "The Borrowstoun Mous and the Landwart Mous." The field mouse's house or "chalmer," we are there informed, was "a simple wane, fecklessly made of fog" and other "foggage." "Wonne" is the form affected by the old English poets and their imitators, such as Spenser and Thomson. It will be remembered, too, that Burns uses the verb—"There's auld Rob Morris, that *wons* in yon glen." Clearly, then, Hogg's "wene" stands for "dwelling." Next, with respect to "maike," while it might mean "creature," "something made," it is more probably Hogg's form of the current Scottish word "mak" or "make," which signifies "match," "mate," or "marrow." The "maike" in the poem is to be identified with the "spirit," "the

meike and reverend fere," who had been "eidently watching for a thousand years and mair"—watching, indeed "sen the banquhet of tyme"—for a sinless virgin free of stain in mind and body. He found at last what he sought in Kilmeny, and brought her to the land of spirits—

"Now shall the land of the spiritis see,
Now shall it ken quhat ane womyn may be!"

There is, I must confess, a difficulty with the word "waike." It may be connected with the word "wake," signifying a "ward," or "district to watch over;" or, again, it may be Hogg's form for "walk," with much the same meaning. It ought probably to be taken in connection with such passages in the poem as—

"We haif watchit their steps as the dawnyng shone,
And deip in the greinwudde walkis alone:"

and

"Oh, wald the fayrest of mortyl kynde
Aye keipe thilke holye troths in mynde,
That kyndred spiritis ilk motion see,
Quha watch their wayis with anxious e'e,
And grieve for the guilt of humanite!"

Or even more probably it is a forced form of "wauk," which the reader will find rhyming to "sake" in the old Scottish ballad of "Erlinton" (see Professor Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Part I., p. 108,—"Erlinton" B, stanza 4). There can be no doubt that Hogg was acquainted with the ballad, and that an echo of the ballad sounds in the disputed passage now under consideration:

"But yonder is a bonnie greenwud,
An' in the greenwud there is a wauk,
An' I'll be there an' sune the morn, love,
It's a' for my true love's sake."

But the faults of the poem—its absurd spelling (think of "comyshonit" for "commissioned"!), its obsolete and obscure phraseology, its structural defect, its incongruous imitation of Allan Ramsay's prophetic "Vision"—sink and disappear as emerges from it all the lovely figure of Kilmeny, encircled with an imagery of this world and not of it, but all in beautiful harmony with the conception of her character.

A FORGOTTEN ROAD AND A FAMOUS VIEW.

It can hardly be affirmed that the roads of old Scotland were *civilly* engineered. If our forefathers knew of any such method or manner of making mutual communication, they certainly did not practise it. A blunt boldness characterised their plan ; savage rudeness their execution of it. Right forward, up hills of the steepest acclivity, down braes of abruptest descent, they projected their lines of intercourse, and with their rough-shod feet beat and battered them into permanent tracks. The shortest cut possible was their motto, when they first entered on a career of road-making. But by-and-by, mistaking means for ends, they seemed actually to prefer the surmounting of difficulties to the avoidance of them, and would go a goodish bit off their way for the dour pleasure of tackling a mountain. Nothing short of forty-five degrees stopped them. It was only a precipice that brought them up. Even then they scorned "to refer the foot," but would skirt the cliff at its very brink—"the view o't gave them little fricht." It would give way before they did ; and they took sharp advantage of the first signs it showed of retreating or sloping off in the way they wanted.

One of several benefits which the primeval manner of road-making over mountains secured to travellers was freedom of view. They could see round about them. The modern way is rather against this. It prefers the base to the brow, and would rather tunnel or fetch a turn than overtop. For this reason the modern traveller—unless he inherit the ancestral spirit, or has caught the craze of the antiquary to drive him into forgotten paths—must be content to know his native land only to that meagre extent and in those aspects to which his road condemns and confines him. The lines—whether of high road or railroad—which have been laid down for him do not contain the best points of view. He trudges or trots along the hill-foot, with petty microscopical peeps within his narrow horizon; or he is whirled past “loose revolving fields” which only weary his retina and bewilder his sense of locality. And this is about the best the modern road can do for him in the way of views. But at its worst—and it is often at that—he is caught between what are called “cuttings,” and shuttled into malodorous tunnels, or he has the blinkers of confining walls and excluding hedges to keep his gaze on the dusty road that lengthens before him in a dreary perspective of vanishing wires. It is not, of course, argued that our earliest road-makers, as if possessed of a superior sense of scenic beauty, drew their lines of intercommunication with the view of indulging it—the opportunity which their roads offer of such æsthetic advantage was a mere accident; but the fact remains that if one is desirous of knowing his country to the best scenic or topographic advan-

tage, without adventuring on forbidden ground, the route for him is the old roadway.

The great North Road from Edinburgh to Perth, constructed with a view to an improved stage-coach communication, conducts the traveller along a course which, in the matter of scenery, has little to offer that is pleasing; less that is picturesque, and nothing that is romantic, till it enters Glen Farg, near the village of Damhead. The passage through the glen, which was engineered in 1808-1810, descends to Strath Earn by a broad, smooth, sinuous roadway, some four miles in length, revealing at every turn a varied succession of moss-mottled rocks and bosky banks, screened at pleasing intervals with covers of larch and fir. But while these rocks and banks form and enclose short views of romantic charm, such as awoke the descriptive powers of young John Ruskin, they also shut out the grand sweep of distant landscape which the older road by the Wicks of Baigley affords from the heights which are the culmination of the western wall of the glen. These are two of the four lines of communication from Kinross-shire into Strath Earn, and both are charged with memories of the old stage-coaching days. The other two are the oldest and the newest respectively. The newest, which is also the least attractive, though the most frequented of the four, is the recently opened railroad which has brought Perth by the fast train within seventy minutes of Edinburgh. To the lover of natural scenery domiciled in Edinburgh, a great recommendation of this road is that it conveys him within about one hour to Glenfarg Station, at which point he can recover the liberty of

his legs, and begin at his own leisure to gratify his taste for the picturesque. If he is fond of what one may call Nature's "interiors," he will stroll down the glen road to the music of the Farg ; if he prefers the open landscape, he will strike up the hill road in the direction of Paris, and speir the way he can hardly miss to the pass of Baigley. The remaining line of communication here to be noticed is the most ancient of all, and dates from times that are almost prehistoric. Now in part a mere track, fast fading into the grassy and heathery wilderness, and scarcely known, except to country people of the neighbourhood, it also leads over the heights, but lies considerably farther to the west than the Baigley road. It steals away westward from the route by Baigley in a grass-grown track which used to be known as Wallace's Road, and descends to the water of Earn by the old homestead of Dron. It is the best of our four roads for magnificence and variety of view ; yet it is the least frequented of all, being, indeed, all but disused. It must have been along this road that Walter Scott, then a boy of fifteen, journeyed on that first famous pony excursion of his, which is for ever memorable as having afforded him his first view of Perth. It is only on this route that a view of the Fair City can be had. Some may even think it is only this view of the town that makes it fair. The impression then made upon Scott's youthful imagination by this view was the *raison d'être* of his last great romance—"The Fair Maid of Perth." In referring to this incident in his early life, Scott's language is unusually ecstatic. He forgets the grandeur of the

Trossachs, and even the varied graces of his own Tweedside home, to cry up the view to northward of Perth and the Tay, as commanded from a spot on this unfrequented path over the eastern Ochils. He claims for this one particular spot the glory of being "one of the most beautiful points of view which Britain, or perhaps the world can afford." The prospect from this spot he describes as a thing of the past, when, nearly half a century after he saw it, he recorded his recollection of its magnificence in the first chapter of his novel. The alteration of the road avoided the view. He beheld from the ridgy eminence, after a long stage from Kinross through a country then waste and uninteresting, and still only moderately attractive, except to natives—"the valley of the Tay, traversed by its ample and lordly stream; the town of Perth, with its two large meadows or Inches, its steeples and its towers; the hills of Moncrieff and Kinnoul, faintly rising into picturesque rocks, partly clothed with woods; the rich margin of the river studded with elegant mansions; and the distant view of the huge Grampian mountains, the northern screen of this exquisite landscape." But it was, he confessed, beyond the power of even his pen to communicate "the exquisite charm which surprise gives to pleasure, when so splendid a view arises when least expected or hoped for, and which Chrystal Croftangry experienced when he beheld for the first time the matchless scene." The praise seems so extravagant, he admits that childish wonder may have been an ingredient in his delight. "I was not," he goes on, "above fifteen years old; and as this had been the first excursion which I was

permitted to make on a pony of my own, I also experienced the glow of independence, mingled with that degree of anxiety which the most conceited boy feels when he is first abandoned to his own undirected counsels. I recollect pulling up the reins without meaning to do so, and gazing on the scene before me as if I had been afraid it would shift, like those in a theatre, before I could distinctly observe its different parts, or convince myself that what I saw was real. Since that hour, and the period is now more than fifty years past, the recollection of that inimitable landscape has possessed the strongest influence over my mind, and retained its place as a memorable thing when much that was influential on my own fortunes has fled from my recollection. It is therefore natural that I should pitch upon some narrative connected with the splendid scenery which made so much impression on my youthful imagination." His keen sense of the beauty of the landscape found metrical expression still more laudatory, and even defiantly boastful. "Behold the Tiber"—he wrote, making use of a poetical tradition which it is common to refer to a point of vantage on the opposite side of the Earn—

"Behold the Tiber ! the vain Roman cried,
Viewing the ample Tay from Baigie side ;
But where's the Scot that would the vaunt repay,
And hail the puny Tiber for the Tay ?"

On the publication of this eulogium of a particular view from the Ochils of Perthshire, various letters were sent him from the county he had belauded so lavishly, not, indeed, to find fault with his laudation, but to correct some little mistakes about names.

Scott was willing enough to allow that he might so far have erred after such a lapse of years, but he insists on his language being the truthful expression of his feelings. "Sure enough," he writes, August 1831, "the general effect of the valley of the Tay, and the ancient town of Perth, rearing its grey head among the rich pastures, and beside the gleaming waters of that noblest of Scottish streams, must remain so as to justify warmer language than Mr Croftangry had at his command." The chief, if not the only, error in Scott's description is in locating his view-point on the Wicks of Baigley. The name may have been vaguely spread over a larger part of the heights a hundred years ago than it is now, or Scott may have been misinformed by a rustic of the locality speaking in the loose way common among rustic topographers, but the fact is that Perth cannot be seen for Moncrieff Hill from the precise place on the Ochil ridge which is now called the Wicks o' Baigley. His view-point, as already indicated, was a few hundred yards further west, on the path that descends to the caller homestead of Dron. There is, however, a splendid view, though it does not include the small city, from the Wicks of Baigley, and it is more easily reached from Glenfarg Station, and therefore from Edinburgh. Indeed, within two hours after leaving Edinburgh, the traveller, with a meditative pipe, may be reposing, in the hush of a fine summer noon, on an Ochil top of fragrant turf near enough to do duty for the Wicks o' Baigley. This pleasure the writer has enjoyed neither for the first nor, he hopes, the last time. It is Clochrat-law, set down in the survey maps as Clochridgelaw, and

rises a well-known landmark from the narrow interval between the glen road and the hill road. It may be regarded as the last of the Ochil tops at the east end of the range. All round in the immediate neighbourhood lies a visible dream of pastoral peace, accentuated rather than disturbed by the hurry of the town pulsating through the scene in swiftly passing trains. Here cocks are crowing an eternal Sabbath among the hills. The bleating of sheep is in one's ears. Now and again a dog barks among the echoes of the larch-wood that lifts its green spires in the foreground. A bee revels in the thymy fragrance, till the incense of your tobacco sends him off grumbling in a zig-zag flight. The main body and middle of your picture is that part of Perthshire where Strathearn approaches to unite with the grànder strath of Tay. It is a view of rich level lands, here and there dotted with hay-coles, through which wind in shining links the stately waters. It realises, as far as anything in northern latitudes can, the scene which Lot surveyed when "he lifted up his eyes and beheld the plain of Jordan, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt." The eyes never tire of dwelling on the view. But no inconsiderable part of the charm of this lovely low-lying landscape is the setting. Eastward, the German Ocean glances a welcome to Tay round a pine-clad hill which hides Pictish Abernethy; northward, over the firs and crags of Moncrieff and Callerfountain which curtain Perth, stands the great Highland rampart of the Grampians, with their clear etherealised outlines and their dim glens, and Schiehallion their advance-guard; westward, over

bare Baigley and Balmano, the sky-line is fretted with the dark peaks of Ben Lomond and Ben Ledi and the rough turbulency of the West Highlands. The scene, of course, is northward, with a semicircle of horizon for boundary. Southward there is little to take the eye but the back of the Lomonds and the sullen brow of Benarty.

ON PENTLAND'S EDGE.

DESPITE the boom in golf and the boom of bicycles, the buckstane on the Braids road is still the goal of his evening walk to many a douce citizen of the gude toun of Edinburgh. Here he "stops to blaw" under the pretext of surveying the scenery, and, content with the moderate exercise and a peep at rurality, hence he returns—like Milton's cattle, "bedward ruminating"—with sober thoughts and pulses gently stirred. It is only on such special occasions as a town holiday that he ventures to extend his walk. The buckstane then becomes his starting-point, from which he has a choice of routes for the day's adventures. He probably feels drawn towards the Pentlands, which stand to him as the embodiment of freedom; but as the enjoyment of freedom on the hills implies the exertion of climbing, and as our burgess is, like Hamlet, "fat and scant of breath," he makes compromise between his limbs and his longing by proposing a leisurely walk to Nine-mile-burn. From the buckstane to the burn is as near as may be a matter of nine miles; it is mostly a level road, agreeably varied with easy ascents and picturesque windings, and it has the great advantage of the close neighbourhood of the Pentlands the whole way. Here and there, indeed, as at Hillend and Wood-

houselee, the hill tumbles in furze, or dips in lawny turf, to the very feet of our pedestrian. He inhales the fine fragrance of mountain air; his ear is charmed by chaffinch and yellow yeldrin, by the babble of brooks and the bleating of ewes. The peace of pastoral life is around him. It is the home of the Gentle Shepherd.

If ever "the Lang Linker"* and his merry companions should write up the land of Allan Ramsay, it is along this road, which, from the buckstane on the Braids to Nine-mile-burn or Carlops, runs close to the sunny side of the Pentlands, that they must direct their pilgrimage. There are traces and traditions of Allan the whole way. It is not forgotten that Ramsay was a burghess—an eminently sensible and successful burghess—of Edinburgh; that he was a denizen of that city for nearly sixty successive years. It is not of the sensible and successful burghess we are here speaking; the type is common and commonplace enough. It is of Allan the poet—not the laureate of Canongate publics and suburban ale-houses, malodorous change-houses and their detestable Lucky Spences and Mother Needhams—but the pastoral Allan, Scotland's own Theocritus, the callan that paints auld Nature to the nines.

" In gowany glens his burnie strays
Where bonnie lasses bleach their claes,
Or trots by hazelly shaws and braes,
Wi' hawthorns gray,
Where blackbirds join the shepherd's lays
At close o' day."

* Hew Ainslie, author of *A Pilgrimage to the Land of Burns*.

It is there the stream of his genius runs sweet and pure—among glens and green hills and village bleaching greens, hazel bushes and hawthorns in “flourish,” and vocal with the strong loitering note of the black-bird. His body may have been among wigs and books in his shops in High Street for far the greater feck of those threescore years, but his better spirit was abroad, and his more congenial life was lived among what was calmest in nature and cleanest in human nature, on the sunny side of the Pentlands.

That Ramsay was familiar with the scenery of the whole route from Carlops to the Braids needs no demonstration. If it must be given, it will be found in the established facts of his life, and in the general spirit, as well as in many particular references in what is best of his verse. He first traversed the route, a boy of fifteen, in the opening year of last century. It was along this route, under the conduct of his step-father, Mr Crichton, that he made his first approach to Edinburgh. First Craigmillar Castle and then the bold outline of Arthur Seat caught his eye as he descended the winding path to Hillend, admonishing him of the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, the destination of his long journey, and his future home. He brought with him, of course, a knowledge of pastoral scenery and rustic life, picked up from daily intercourse in his boyhood among the sheep farms of Crawford Moor. This early knowledge doubtless gave his mind, so far as it was poetical, its bent to pastoralism, and formed the basis of his pastoral creations in both lyric and eclogue. But it can hardly be denied that this early bent was developed

by Pentland pastoralism, and that Pentland scenes mingled in his poetry with his recollections of Crawford Moor. Before he was thirty he was the recognised laureate of the Pentlands. Cairketton was his Soracte :—

“ Look up to Pentland's tow'ring tap,
Buried beneath great wreaths o' snaw,
O'er ilka cleuch, ilk scaur, an' slap,
As high as ony Roman wa'.”

At three points on the hill-foot road, at the Hunter's Tryst, Woodhouselee, and Newhall, tradition is busiest to-day with the memory of Allan Ramsay. Strange that each of these places should claim to be the true and original scene of “The Gentle Shepherd.” The Hunter's Tryst, in view from the buckstane, is some three miles nearer Edinburgh than Woodhouselee, while Woodhouselee is some five from Newhall, a little beyond Nine-mile-burn. The weakest tradition, and probably the most recent, is concerned with the Hunter's Tryst. Miss Warrender, in her *Walks near Edinburgh*, repeats this tradition, and connects it—if I remember rightly, for her book is not at the moment at hand—with interesting particulars in the life of Scott and Hogg. Whether we are to look townward on the farm lands of Comiston, or hillward on the braes of Swanston for the fields of Glauclaud, tradition does not stoop to inform us ; but perhaps Swanston now furnishes as near a representation of “the shepherd's village and fields some few miles from Edinburgh,” where Allan located his rustic drama, as the Pentland district at this late date can offer. I must not be misunderstood ; I am far

from identifying Swanston with the poet's original. Newhall, in my opinion, is that original, as far as there was one; but Swanston is just such a pastoral hamlet of low-walled, thatch-roofed cottages, clustering carelessly round a brook-divided common on the lower declivities of the Pentlands, as might answer to "The Shepherd's Village" of the drama. At Newhall tradition is loud-voiced, and articulate, and definite. She points the visitor to Patie's Hill and Patie's Mill, to Habbie's How and Patie's Lee. History comes to her support with a record of duly authenticated facts. At Newhall House lived Sir David Forbes, whose frequent guest our poet undoubtedly was. Here often met the Penicuicks and the Clerks, occasionally the Queensberrys and Gay, perhaps young Jemmy Thomson—all friends of Ramsay; here, in the hospitable knight himself, Allan may have found the prototype (in character) of Sir William Worthy; here a Habby's How that, unlike the Glencross fraud, finds a faithful reflection in charming Peggy's charming description:—

"Out o'er a little linn
The water fa's an' mak's a singin' din;
A pool briest-deep beneath, as clear as glass,
Kisses wi' easy whirls the bordering grass."

There remains the tradition of Woodhouselee, a tradition which was full-blown before the eighteenth century closed. It expresses itself in a rustic "Temple" on the green hillside—one of those private shrines which were so much in vogue in England in the earlier half of the eighteenth century—such as Shenstone, for example, loved to set up

under every green tree at the Leasowes. The White-houselee temple is of unbarked fir branches, nicely and compactly fitted into a sort of octagonal kiosk, which opens on three sides to the east with an extensive and really charming view of the valley of the Esks—the Scottish Tempe, as some one has dared to dub it. The “temple” is a snug little summer-house perched on a shelf of the descending hills, where one might sit in peace, disturbed only by the sounds of a rookery overhead, and meditate, half-pleased and half-curious, the inscription on the votive table which the “temple” protects :—

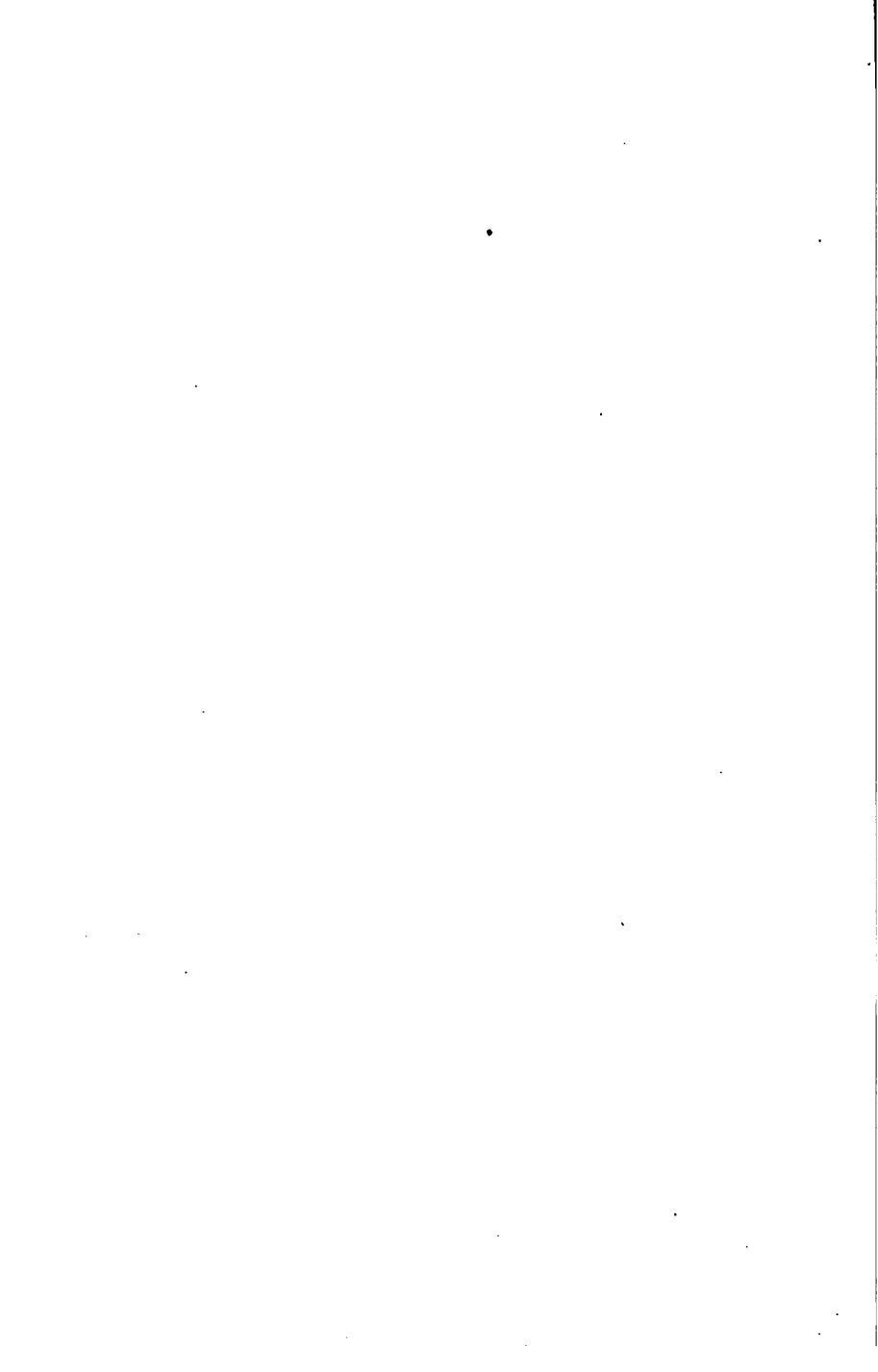
“ALLANO RAMSAY ET GENIO LOCI.

“Here midst those scenes that taught thy Doric muse
Her sweetest song ; the hills, the woods, and stream,
Where beauteous Peggy strayed, listening the while
Her Gentle Shepherd’s tender tale of love ;
Scenes which thy pencil, true to nature, gave
To live for ever. Sacred be this shrine,
And unprofaned by ruder hands the stone
That owes its honours to thy deathless name.”

Above the legend is a collection of pastoral emblems—panpipe, crook, stock-and-horn, and comic mask. One is pleased with the devotion, and curious to know what personal connection Ramsay had with the ancient estate of Fulford (or New Woodhouselee).

PART III.

OF LOCHLEVEN AND THE
LANDS ABOUT IT.



"GAY" KINROSS.

"Press'd by heavy laws,
And gay, alas ! no more,
It bears a name of joy, because
It has been gay of yore !"

THE FOUNTAIN (*adapted*).

LOCHLEVEN is the lodestone of Kinross-shire, and the attraction is only for anglers. They make no account of its town. It furnishes them with a hotel, and it is of no further service. The relationship between loch and town has changed. Once Kinross owned the loch ; now it is the other way about. It has become a mere adjunct of the lake ever since the discovery was made, scarcely half a century ago, that Lochleven trout will rise to the lure.

It is hard to realise that Kinross was ever young, and spruce, and sprightly. To speak of Kinross as gay must sound like irony in the ears of one acquainted with the present condition and appearance of this dingy, little, old and antiquated town. It is, indeed, sadly in want of something to enliven its dull gables and lack-lustre windows. It looks gay neither near nor afar. There is nothing in its mean-looking buildings to suggest a romantic past ; nothing in its dowie or deserted street to promise a prosperous

future. Anything over Coyctus drearier than its dull, narrow, winding street in November—or, for that part, a drenching day at Lammastide—it would be difficult to imagine; might be impossible to find if one did not stumble on Dunning or Auchtermuchty, Cities of Dreadful Night, in the neighbourhood. In moist weather it is little better than a “lake-dwelling” of chills and cramps and rheumatics; in wet weather—which its inhabitants euphonistically describe as “*saft*”—it is a swamp, a paradise for frogs or cranes, and filled with croaking. Moist or wet weather prevails here for nine—perhaps for eleven—months in twelve. The town squats among waterflags and rushes on a dead flat fast by “the Thrapple Hole,” not many feet from the loch side, and only a few inches above the loch level.

“I see the muddy wave, the dreary shore,
Which mortals visit, and return no more.”

The whole small county is damp, an inland Ayrshire, moister than any shire of Scotland under the same meridians, but in comparison with its one town and the loch area, the rest of the county is almost dry. What chiefly gives the western character of humidity to this eastern county is that green gully of the Ochil range, where the heads of Gleneagles and Glendevon meet on the lowered water-shed. Through this pass, this gap in the central rampart of Scotland, the clouds and storms ascending from the Atlantic roll in unbroken column, till, spreading out over Kinross-shire, they at last come to camp, caught within its basin by the encircling hills of the Ochils,

the Lomonds, Benarty, and the braes of Cleish. Over this area they shed their liquid treasures, or hang in uncondensed imminence for weeks and weeks. It would make some amends for western superabundance of moisture if western mildness of temperature accompanied it ; but the "harrs," or hoar mists, and the cutting winds of springtime indicate that the east has not quite surrendered Kinross-shire to western rule.

The county, which, it must be acknowledged, flings through parting clouds and flying scud a coquettish glance of rare loveliness now and again in early summer, looks its best when arrayed in the matronly charms of settled and sober September. It then that its friends would wish to present the county. Then Cleish and the Ochil uplands to south and west are green and rough with fragrant pasture ; the majesty of the Lomonds is "invested with purpureal gleams" of blooming heather ; even the gloom of sullen Benarty is lifted, or at least lightened ; the lake rocks, or rests, a deep blue below ; the sky soars, illimitably high, a light blue above—blue washed with milk, the turquoise blue of forget-me-nots ; while from the heart of a hundred peaceful farms on the plain the yellow radiance of ripe corn illumines the roadways, and delays the coming on of evening. Even the vagrant, or the huxterer of herring, is transfigured in the autumn glow.

Little of all this, which seems to transform the county, making of at least one nook of earth "an insubstantial faery place," affects the town of Kinross. It is impossible of metamorphosis. It is one of those

dull rustic towns that manage, through a perversity of disposition, to exclude rurality, which alone makes rusticity bearable. It would require much lilac and lavender to brighten and sweeten it; much paint to conceal its grime; a new pavement, smoother, more regular, less muddy; a new arrangement of its houses, a new style of houses; a new situation.

And yet we must believe that Kinross was at one time gay. Its gaiety was indeed its distinguishing characteristic. Carlisle was scarcely so merry as Kinross was gay. Not more pronouncedly gay was the family of Gordon. The next most marvellous thing to the fact of its former gaiety is the apparent fact that the lost gaiety has only recently disappeared. About the middle of last century the town was still gay. Such is the testimony of Michael Bruce. Suspicion, however, arises that the youthful poet may have been referring to Kinross, in his description of its gaiety, relatively to his own sombre and slumbrous village of Kinnesswood. It may have been gay comparatively with that hillside hamlet of peat-reek and Puritanism. However this may be, it is undeniably accredited with gaiety in the local epic—respectably written, in serious imitation of the sedate, not to say pompous, style of Thomson—"Loch Leven: A Poem." Michael, the beloved of his country, studied United Presbyterian divinity in Kinross, in a little room professionally known as "The Hall," situated in a narrow wynd leading off the main street. Here some half-dozen lads or so had a professor all to themselves. To their unsophisticated minds the ongoings of a few wild weavers

on a Saturday at e'en may have suggested the idea of gaiety. There is some reason at least for connecting the gaiety of Kinross with the weaving fraternity. The modern weaver—I speak of that dwining and dwindling genus, the hand-loom artisan—is melancholy itself, embodied in emaciation. But the weaver of a hundred years ago might be a very different creature. There were then two varieties of him—the respectable and the regardless. He made good wages, and a sense of independency gave him spirit. The respectable representative, the weaver of an ancient tradition, like Michael Bruce's father, sang psalms when he was merry, and prepared for duly observing the Sabbath, on the lines laid down by Moses, by shaving himself, and setting his house and household in order on Saturday afternoon. The "regardless," again, neither feared God nor regarded man, but drove the industrious shuttle all week, and went raking and boozing on Saturday and Sunday. To this 'lot belonged the "gallant" weaver of the old songs. Kinross had its complement of them. It is surely Tennant who alludes in his "Anster Fair" to Kinross and her "weavers gay." With them he couples the cutlers, a sullen class of mechanics now (in vain) lost to Kinross. Yet Kinross and cutlery were long and honourably associated. The most trustworthy steel blades came from Kinross. They were the crack of Fife. They were sought for at every Scottish fair, were in every packman's box or bundle, in every ploughboy's pouch. The Kinross guild of knife-grinders, proud of their pre-eminence, had even the hardihood to challenge the ancient

English home of cutlery, Sheffield itself. They circulated their challenge with their wares. For example :—

“ In Kinross was I made,
Horn-haft and blade ;
Sheffield ! for thy life,
Show me such a knife ! ”

The cutler has cut his last stick, and travelled away from Kinross for ever ; his weaving brother is in a wandering and waefu' minority ; and with their decay and disappearance, its gaiety has gone from the loch-side burgh. Once a year, on the last Monday of July, a perfunctory attempt is made even yet to keep up connection with the reputation for ancient gaiety. The occasion is known as *Jooley Fair*. But an attempt at the resurrection of mirth is generally dreary ; and in the case of Kinross the attempt is from without. It is the mirth of merry-go-rounds, and mountebanks, and cheap-jacks ; the Kinrossian looks on with his hands in his lank breeches-pockets, and draws melancholy comparisons. The only possible restoration of the ancient mirth and merriment is in the power of Lady Fiction ; and of her creation, consummated by the pen of Scott, we may have a peep at will in a few wonderful pages of *The Abbot*. It is curious to reflect that the last living prototype of Scott's long array of Scottish characters belonged to Kinross, and that this personage was comparatively recently still moving about in the flesh, ignorant of the niche in fiction in which she had been for ever fixed. All old and many middle-aged people in Kinross must remember Mother Nicneven, the parent

of Satan Pate. The cursing accomplishments of the son had caught Scott's ear when he was on a visit to Blairadam, and drawn his attention to the family.

LOCHLEVEN AND THE BISHOPSHIRE.

TILL the remarkable discovery was made, not quite half a century ago, that Lochleven trout will rise to the lure, the only interest attaching to the now well and widely known Kinross-shire lake was of a historical character. The interest centred in two buildings that stood—the one a monastery, the other a castle—on different islands of the lake. One of those buildings, associated with the sainted name of Serf or Servan, “the dark-attired Culdee” (whose hermit disciples, be it remembered, enjoyed in their lonely Inch the pious benefactions of Macbeth), has indeed quite succumbed to the weight and wear of ten centuries. The other, representing for its predecessor as well as itself a less remote antiquity, is also a mere ruin; but it still maintains above ground a sufficiency of coherent tower and wall to satisfy the gaze of the antiquarian visitor. It has traditions, received from the ancestral castle, of Wallace and the English Edwards; but its own proper memories of Queen Mary are its richest possession. The veriest urchin that has dipped into the romance of Scottish history is familiar with every turn of the story that connects the name of Mary with this isolated tower. He knows how she was brought thither a prisoner in the summer of 1567, how she

was compelled here to sign away her right to the Scottish crown, and how, after a year's detention, she cleverly managed to turn the tables on her enemies by locking them in the castle and escaping with the keys in a boat. Her beauty, her spirit, the variety of her fortunes, and her fate have all combined to make the relation of her life in all its details singularly interesting; and certainly that portion of her short reign which she was forced to spend, discrowned and a captive, in Lochleven Keep, was both long enough and momentous enough to be memorable. It may be doubted, however, if the imaginative scenes of Scott, as portrayed in the twenty-first and subsequent chapters of *The Abbot*, have not given a fresh and an additional interest to the facts of history. The calculation may be ventured that for one that is drawn to the shores of Lochleven by *The Tales of a Grandfather*, there are three that come on account of *The Abbot*.

The revival of its historical fame dates from 1820. A new and more powerful attraction to Lochleven was discovered about thirty years later. Then, for the first time apparently, the public realised the fact that the trout of Lochleven, already famous for their flesh tint and flavour, were willing to furnish sport by rising to the seduction of fly or minnow. For centuries previous to this the capabilities of the loch for the supply of good eating in fish were well known, and were largely and regularly utilised, both by the proprietors and the poaching inhabitants of the neighbouring farm-towns and villages. The net was the legitimate implement of capture, and besides trout,

char—which seem to have disappeared from the lake since the reduction of the water level in 1830, perch, pike, and eels were taken in great quantities. The pike were occasionally of monstrous size; even trout of fabulous weight—18 lb. for instance—were enclosed in the nets; and it appears from a document of the sixteenth century, signed by the Primate of Scotland, that eight barrels or casks of salted eels, forming part of the feu-mails of the adjoining lands of the Bishopshire, were sent annually to the pantry of the Archbishop of St Andrews. It is not, however, the market or the table value of the fish that now gives the lake the high place it holds in public estimation, but the splendid opportunities for sport which its waters afford. No inconsiderable part of the pleasure of Lochleven angling is the precariousness of the sport. Excellent baskets may be made—good baskets are the rule—but the individual angler finds a peculiar piquancy in the uncertainty of securing one. It is never safe to bet on a Lochleven basket. A full one is not seldom the good fortune of the novice, at the same time that the accomplished artist on the same bit of water, perhaps from the same boat, despite his experience of innumerable lakes and streams, expends the skill of a lifetime to little or absolutely no purpose at all. The weather is almost as puzzling a factor in Lochleven angling as the sheer caprice of the trout. What is good fishing weather for other waters may be the very worst possible for Lochleven. Scott speaks in his novel of successful fishing with a breeze from the west. He could hardly have spoken so from experience. On the whole, a cold east wind with a grey sky is a much

more favourable atmospheric condition for lively sport on Lochleven. But the puzzling things about the Lochleven trout, upon which one inquires in vain for reliable information, are legion. To what variety of trout does it belong? Whence come its flavour and its bright colour? Why does it sulk, often for a whole season, amongst ooze or rannoch at the lake bottom? How is it incapable of racial culture outwith its parent lake? Two things are certain: it affords rare pastime when it happens to be in a sportive temper; and it adds a unique charm to the "spread" of the breakfast-table.

Since solitary anglers and social angling clubs began to frequent Lochleven the scenery of the Kinross-shire lake district has begun to be heard about. The loveliness of its horizon, it must be owned, has been a late and a gradual discovery. Much depends on the state of the weather, more on the season of the year. In November or February, for example, a duller pond than Lochleven, a bleaker environment than its melancholy flats and dour hills, could hardly be imagined. But in almost any month of the year the casual visitor coming unadvisedly may hurry off with such an impression of its "muddy wave and dreary shore" as half-a-dozen views of its better aspect will not easily efface. The normal appearance of the lake is probably a neutral grey, and it is from this circumstance apparently that it derives its name of Leven—though the vulgar derivation which connects the name with the number eleven is, even in this philological age, as rampant as ever. The local rustic will tell you that the lake is eleven miles in circuit, that it bears on

its breast eleven islands, has eleven tributary burns, contains eleven kinds of fish, and is, or was, enclosed by the lands of eleven lairds. You will, of course, accept neither his premises nor his conclusion. But in spite of the generally bleak aspect of Lochleven there are occasions when it will recall in no unfavourable comparison the softer graces that constitute the charm of Ulleswater. Given, however, the broken light of a pure May morning, or the steady radiance of a meilow September afternoon, and the vision of Lochleven and its surrounding scenery is such a picture of life and gaiety in the one case, of serenity and repose in the other, as haunts the memory and enchants the imagination for ever.

Much of the reposeful charm of Lochleven towards the end of the angling season is furnished by the lofty outline of the Lomonds, more especially that part of the range above the village of Scotlandwell known as the Bishop Hill. The peace as of some "mountain of the Lord" steals from the pastoral slopes and tranquil hamlets of this stately rampart, which, entering the soul of the unsuccessful angler, consoles him for his toom basket, and is the best recompense for his toilsome day. Nor is the charm of the hills around him the spell of natural beauty only. Legendary and poetical associations haunt the landscape. It was among the Cleish Hills to the south-west that Sir David Lyndsay's hero, Squire Meldrum, was reared, and it was at "green Benarty's base," at the south end of the loch, that the Fife representative at Holyrood, when the Queen held her wake, had his dwelling. But Benarty recalls a couplet which comes

as a sedative to the heat of our present political life—

“Happy’s the man that belongs to nae party,
But sits in his ain house, and looks at Benarty.”

The Lomonds again, to the east, are the Harz of Kinross-shire, for fairies and witches and dark *diablerie*. The Bishop Hill is a local Brocken. Many a Walpurgis Night of revelry has been celebrated on its broad top by the wan light of waning moons. It was here wonned the wee wee man under a moss-grey stane, whose face was like the cauliflower, for he neither had blude nor bane. He could play on his reed pipe, however, with a skill that Amphion might have envied :—

“ It rang sae sweet on the green Lomond
That the night wind lowner blew,
And it soopit alang the Loch Leven
And walkened the white sea-mew.

It rang out sae sweet through the green Lomond,
So sweet but and so shrill,
That the weasels lap out of their mouldy holes
And danced on the midnight hill.

The corbie craw cam’ gledging near,
The earne gaed veering by,
And the trouts lap out of the loch Leven
Charmed with the melody.”

The Bishopshire, as in memory of St Moak* the

* I am informed by a learned correspondent (W. J. N. Liddall, Esq., of Navty) that the whole of Portmoak was at one time Kirklands, owned by the Archbishop of St. Andrews, the prior of St. Serf, and the “minister” of Scotlandwell. The Archbishop was the superior of farms and fishings from Powmill and Balgedie, by Kinneston, to Brackly. Mr Liddall also points out a Bishopshire in the parish of Machar, in Aberdeenshire.

eastern shore of Lochleven between the Lomonds and the water edge is called, has its special attraction in poetical history, for here it was the brief earthly career of poor Michael Bruce was run, beginning in a weaver's cottage in Kinnesswood—to native throats *Kinaskit*—a primitive village, once merry with hand-loom and pirn-wheels, now lying like a bleached buckie from which all life has been long ago exhaled. A couple of miles farther east, in the churchyard of Portmoak, is the young poet's grave and simple memorial. The region is well worthy of a visit, yet not one in a thousand anglers to Lochleven thinks of the pilgrimage. Bruce deserves to be remembered. It was for the villagers of his day that he wrote, still a youth in his teens, such paraphrases as "Few are thy days," "O happy is the man," and "The beam that shines"—hymns which are as familiar to the memory and as dear to the pious heart of his country as are the songs of Burns themselves. Indeed, a parallel might be drawn between the work which Bruce did for sacred song and that which was done by Burns in the profane department of lyrical verse. We mean no offence to "rantin', rovin' Robin." Bruce divorced such doggerel as "O mother, dear Jerusalem," from our fine old church tunes, just as Burns, some thirty years later, cleansed the enchanting old Scottish airs of the unutterably vicious or silly words to which they had been wedded. In his native land at least Bruce lives in his hymns, independently of the beautiful ode to the winged "Attendant of the Spring," by which he is known in England. Whether he wrote that ode is a question not now to be decided. One

cannot in this case trust to internal evidence, and the historical evidence seems to the utterly candid mind to be as strong for John Logan as for Michael Bruce. There is something for the Logan authorship, after all, in the fact that Logan claimed it. The controversy, needless to say, was not of Bruce's making. It is a pity that so sweet a lyric as the "Address to the Cuckoo," and so gentle a life as that of Michael Bruce, should be embittered and disturbed by controversy.

Briefly, the case for Logan is this : First, he claimed it, printed it as his, and stuck to his claim to the last. Secondly, it was handed about (as Dr Robertson of Dalmeny affirmed), "and highly extolled among his literary acquaintances in East Lothian long before its publication, probably—though not certainly—in 1767," that is, not later than 1767 at latest : Logan was then nineteen years of age, Bruce twenty-one. Thirdly, Mrs Hutcheson, the wife of an Edinburgh merchant and cousin to Logan, assured Dr Anderson that she saw the Ode in her relative's handwriting before it was published. And, briefly, the case for Bruce is this : First, the Ode was seen before publication in his handwriting by various persons ; and, secondly, his correspondence is reported to have borne a reference to a composition he was writing about a "gowk." It is to little purpose to catalogue the influential names that appear on each side in the controversy. They are pretty equally balanced. With a sentimental partiality for Michael Bruce, I must repeat my judgment that whether Bruce or Logan wrote the Ode is not now to be decided.

FISH AND FISHING AT LOCHLEVEN.

It cannot be denied that the great attraction of Lochleven is for anglers. There are the regular frequenters, and there is the occasional visitor; but between them they must now include thousands of persons scattered far and wide over the country to whom the subject of angling on the Kinross-shire lake, from their personal knowledge of it, can be of little interest. They can answer all the inquiries which in her curiosity on the subject Queen Mary put to Roland Græme, "inquiries into the place where the fish can be taken, their size, their peculiarities, the times when they are in season, and a comparison between the Lochleven trouts and those which are found in other lakes and rivers of Scotland." Yet, though the charm of novelty is already lost, the interest is quite of modern growth. The generation still possesses the country that first began to find fly-casting on Lochleven waters a profitable pastime. It is so recently as 1850—so we are credibly informed—that the discovery was made that Lochleven trout will rise to the fly. If this be so, then the honour of having predicted the discovery by some score years would seem to belong to Sir Walter Scott. *The Abbot* appeared in 1831, and in a certain chapter in that delightful novel incidental reference seems to be made

to fly-fishing on Lochleven. It is a kind of double anachronism, for the reference—made by the writer nineteen years before the practice was known—applies to a scene descriptive of the usages of the sixteenth century. The reference, it must be confessed, is a little vague, and is not unexposed to a charge of inconsistency. George Douglas, we read, “sate in the stern of the little skiff trimming his fishing-tackle, and from time to time indicating by signs to Græme, who pulled the oars, which way he should row. . . . ‘Row,’ said Douglas, ‘towards St Serf’s Island; there is a breeze from the west, and we shall have sport, keeping to windward of the isle where the ripple is strongest. We will speak more of what you have mentioned when we have had an hour’s sport.’ Their fishing was successful, though never did two anglers pursue even that silent and unsocial pleasure with less of verbal intercourse.” In this passage there are several points of interest—such as Scott’s general opinion of angling as a pursuit, and his apparently intimate knowledge of a good fishing station to the east of St Serf’s; but the chief point to notice at present is his probable reference to fly-fishing. A little further on, however, in the same chapter, an expression is used which strikes the reader as being inconsistent with this interpretation. “‘Go to,’ said the seneschal, ‘thou art a foolish boy, unfit to deal with any matter more serious than the casting of a net or the flying of a hawk.’” If only Scott had made the Douglas say “the casting of a line,” the description, one feels, would have hung together better, and the interpretation would be complete.

The trout of Lochleven, remarkable as everybody knows for their high flavour and beautiful red colour, gave its distinction to the lake long before they gave pastime to the angler. They were taken in nets, and the captures that were made may well fill the mind of modern fishers with astonishment and envy. Twenty-four dozen at a single haul was a common catch. The most productive places, or setts as they were locally called, included the Prap, and Powmill, and Jummock's Deep. At the last-named station, situated near the old manse of Orwell on the north shore, a haul of thirty dozen stands on record. Pike, of sharklike dimensions, and eels by the barrelful, not to mention the prolific and pachydermatous perch, were also, and still are, to be reckoned among the more or less valuable and various produce of the lake. But the trout have so monopolised the interest of Lochleven that these are seldom taken into account; and it may be news to many that char, and even the flounder, at one time gave variety to the happy family of Lochleven fishes. Whether the reduction of the lake had to do with the disappearance of char is matter of uncertain debate. It was probably a factor without being the prime cause. The reduction was made in the winter-time of 1830-31, and was on a scale of sufficient magnitude to affect the loch in almost every aspect of it. It altered the shore line so as to give a new contour to the shape of the lake-basin, it increased the area of the old islands and created new ones, it destroyed or restricted the feeding and breeding beds of the fish, probably to a greater extent than is believed. Its gains to the land

and the millowners on the Leven outlet are obvious enough ; but its losses to the lake included at least a square mile and a quarter of water area, and from four and a half to eight feet of depth. The old Castle island, which Queen Mary knew, comprised only two acres, and the old Inch—strangely neglected, but by far the most classical spot within the bounds of Lochleven—was metamorphosed in shape and altered in area from thirty-five acres to treble its natural size.

To the epicure the disappearance of char, not only from Lochleven, but from almost all the British lakes, may be a cause of grief, for the fish is dainty eating ; but to the true angler, whose stomach is not for fish but fishing, the matter is hardly worth a moment's concern, for the creature is comparatively non-sportive. It refuses to leap to the fly, and contemns the blandishments of the playful minnow. It is one of those seriously-minded fish that, when sinners entice them, withhold their consent. Yet it has not found salvation in abstention. The trout, on the other hand, which flies at every bait and coquets with every allurements, seems to thrive through it all. There lurks a moral here, which the intelligent reader may point for himself. In Lochleven to whose waters the char has been a stranger for now nearly sixty years, it used to be known as the "gally-fish," or "gelly-troch," a local name given it by the fishermen, who found that its principal food was the "gelly"—a species of black leech pretty plentiful in the lake. Pennant, without seeing a specimen, was probably the first to identify the gelly-troch with the char, although the Lochleven

fishermen seem to have rather astonished him by their accounts of its size and weight and abundance. It was, if they were to be believed, five, or even six times larger, and as many times heavier, than the English and Welsh pigmy char with which he had acquaintance, and it was so rife that Lethangie and Lathro poacher-ploughmen bagged it in half-boll sacks, and split, salted, and dried it for winter provision. It came sailing up the North Quiech to their bothy door, in a feeble effort to find safe spawning-ground. The distance was not more than a mile from the loch. It might have fared better if it had gone farther. Thus it happens, that though the char is a fish so fortified—presumably by precept or intuition (for experience it has none)—as to refuse a look at the hook, it is exposed to other dangers from which the adventurous fin is comparatively free. Over-caution is a sad hindrance to enterprise, and is apt to induce a timid disposition and a phlegmatic habit. It would appear to be so in the case of the gelly-troch. So long as that fish kept to the deep water of “the hems” it found food and safety; but the spawning season came in its regular round, and the gravid fish, obedient to the “prick of nature,” was driven forth to the lake shallows and the feeder streams and burns from the Ochils. The nearest shallows, those of the lake for the most part, contented it; and there, through the mother fish’s timidity, the spawn was left passive to the mercy of innumerable enemies from which it would have been safe in the more distant shallows of the spawning streams—to which the adventurous trout more securely makes

periodic resort. In this way, perhaps largely by this very means, the gelly-troch became a diminishing quantity in the lake, and at length about the year 1837, the last of the race had the range of Lochleven. It seems to have grown weary of its solitude, for it repeatedly suffered itself to be taken in the nets that year. The fishermen—worthy surely of the notice of a Theocritus—saw the pathos of the situation, and piously put it back. But the last capture was tragic: the bribe of a reverend collector (not reverend on this account, but for the ordinary reason) spiced the conscience of an unprincipled fisherman; and char is now as much a tradition of Lochleven as the shade of St Serf or the ghost of Queen Mary.

THE BOOKS OF LOCHLEVEN.

THE oldest human associations connected with Lochleven and the lands about it would seem to be of Basque origin. Much interesting mystery is involved in the migrations of that strange people, but ethnology gives assurance that we are on their traces in such localities as reveal in their place-names the significant syllable *ur*. The statement of a general law like this tempts one to a hundred applications ; it sets the mind skipping at once, and we find ourselves in Mesopotamia, speculating on the relationship of the grand old Patriarch to the Basques, and how Ur came to belong to the Chaldeans. But to return to Lochleven. There is no denying the fact that among ancient place-names in the neighbourhood the word that is said to bewray the Basque now and again appears. There is, for example, the district of Urwell or Orwell ; there is the Ury burn, midway between Milnathort and Kinross ; there is Loch Ore, on the sunny slope of Benarty. And the list could be extended. Whether the lake-dwelling recently discovered in the loch was a Basque homestead, or the haunt of a Pictish community, is an interesting problem. We forget what the learned Society that meditates on the Mound made of this part of their subject. And they might

well be excused if they did not even touch it, in the famine of information which everywhere surrounds the adventurer into time's unchronicled wastes. Most people are content to make the period of the Roman occupation the limit of their explorations in "the dark backward and abysm of time;" and there is no absolute want of suggestive material in the remote historical hunting-grounds of Lochleven; but even in this department of antiquity, whether as affects Romans or Picts, all speculation here is vague, and much of it vain. It may have been that in the early centuries a royal castle—as royalty went in those days—stood on the island in which young Queen Mary, a thousand years later, pined for a twelvemonth, and that Pictish kings were rowed in rude pomp where the bourgeois angler to-day plies his rod over Lochleven waters. It may have been that the battle against Galgacus was fought on the slopes of the Lomonds. The case in favour of this view was warmly urged some sixty years ago by Colonel Miller of Upper Urquhart, and the testimony of Tacitus called into court not without a show of plausibility. We are, however, on the surer ground—the *terra firma*, so to say—of direct record when we get quit of the Romans; and by the end of the sixth century we seem to stand on parchment. The signs of ancient life on and near Lochleven are no longer a dumb show, dimly seen through the morning twilight. They become clear to the eye, and fall, as through a phonograph, articulately, if faintly, on the listening ear. With the advent of St Serf its earliest reliable memories come to Lochleven.

St Serf's Isle is, indeed, the *locus classicus* of Lochleven. It is *par excellence* the inch, or island, of that famous lake. It has long suffered unaccountable neglect, and even its indisputable title to rank as the centre of Lochleven interest has been usurped by the Castle Island. History and romance, the fortunes of Queen Mary, and the fiction of Scott have directed, more especially within the century now running, the popular gaze away from St Serf's to the Castle Island. But whether as regards size, or antiquity of association, or intrinsic historical value, the palm that belongs to superior regard must be restored to the Island of St Serf. Before the partial drainage of the loch in 1830, it included somewhere over thirty acres of very fair land, when the area of the Castle Island consisted of but two; and now the reduction of the loch area has added fifty or sixty acres to its natural and original extent. It is at present in pasture, but the goodness of at least part of the soil of St Serf's may be inferred from the excellent crops of peas and barley which it yielded to tillage, as I have just been informed, not many years ago. The antiquity of its associations is undoubted. They go back, as already stated, to the seventh century. The annalist of the island is Andrew Wyntoun, whose ambitious chronicle of "The History of the World, from the Creation of Man to the Captivity of James I. of Scotland"—a work rivalling, if not in style and philosophical reflection, at least in scope and range, the *magnum opus* of Raleigh—was written in the solitude of St Serf's, "where that this lord was keeper of the cell." According to Prior Andrew,

a certain Pictish king, about the year 700 A.D., piously made over to St Serf, and the Culdees residing there, the holy Island of Lochleven. Serf, or Servanus, was then seemingly the Prior of Lochleven, called to that position by Adamnan, the Abbot of Iona, of whom he was a contemporary. Wyntoun informs the painful reader of his Skeltonian Chronicle that Adamnan met St Serf at Inchkeith, and, struck with his capabilities and virtues, invited him to Lochleven Inch, in Fife, there to become a commissioned follower of St Columba, and "drive owre the time of his life there." The original priory or church of Lochleven, like that of Iona or the Nor' Loch, was, no doubt, a primitive affair of turf and wattles. The rude stone structure, the basement ruins of which are the one visible feature of the island now, though venerable with age and old associations, is doubtless of later date. But shortly after the original establishment, and in recognition of the piety of the pale monks of the isle, royal donations began to flow in, to the comparative enrichment of the Priory. King Edgar, Malcolm Canmore—it will put his character in a new light perhaps when we add the name of Macbeth: these were among the royal donors to the religious house of Lochleven, which now began to be known as another Iona, and "the School of Virtues." Malcolm's gift was the town and lands of Balchristie; Edgar bestowed Pitnemokin—identified as Portmoak; while Macbeth compounded with the Church for the sins of his usurpation by conveying (in the Pistolic sense?) to the servants of God and St Serf the lands of Kirkness and the village of "Bolgy," or

Bolgyne" (*qu.* Balgedie?), and craving an interest in their prayers. But it was David, of beneficent memory, that effected the greatest change in the history of the Culdee connection with Lochleven. Generous above all Scottish kings to the Church though he was, he unhappily broke the Culdee traditions of Lochleven. About the middle of the twelfth century he caused to be made over to the Canons of St Andrews Lochleven Island, and the property of the Culdees therein and therewith connected. A record of this generous but unjust transference of power and property is extant, and will prove of great interest to local landowners and residents in particular, to all students of early Scottish ecclesiastical history and to antiquaries in general. The transference of the establishment of St Serf's from independent government to the authority of St Andrews included the transference of the roots—as one may call them—by which the establishment had drawn from the lands and localities around Lochleven its temporal or material sustenance and growth. Those feeders of the visible Church, regarded in its corporal and carnal aspect, lay almost exclusively round that end of the loch, the east end, where is situated the island of St Serf, and landward away into Fife. They included Findathy (now Findaty), Kirkness, Pitnemok (now Portmoak), Markinch, Balchristie, Bolgyne; but there is no mention of Orwell, Kinross, Gairney, or other places at the opposite end of Lochleven. While the lands of several, if not all, of those estates and farms went from a Culdee to a Catholic proprietary, certain tolls

and taxes from all of them were diverted to St Andrews. A copy of the deed of conveyance of the entire Culdee property from Lochleven to St Andrews will be found in Dr Jamieson's *History of the Ancient Culdees* (Appendix, p. 376). The tolls and taxes included so many measures of peas from this field, so many bushels of barley from that; a pig from this township, the duties of pontage or the use of a mill in that: "cum Findahin (clerical error for *Findathin*) cum uno molendino in terra Findathin," etc. But most interesting of all is the inventory of that part of the Culdee property in St Serf's Island, in the year 1150, which consisted of books. In the deed of conveyance, they come after the pigs and mills—as being probably of less worth to the canons of St Andrews. A meagre library, in sooth, it was—in these days of princely book bequests; yet the most palatial of modern free libraries must give place in point of interest, perhaps in point of influence as well, to the little bookshelf of old Lochleven Priory. Where, and in what circumstances, and by what hands those books were written; whence they were borrowed, or on what friendly errands as loans they were sent; what pious hearts they cheered, or what ignorant minds they enlightened; what animated discussions they gave rise to within the seclusion of the Priory walls, while without autumn rains lashed the loch, or wintry showers whitened the passive Lomonds; what calm meditations they induced in moon-lighted walks on the open island—these and a hundred other similar questions occur to the thoughtful mind, and must for ever remain unanswered.

The books, mainly on moral and religious subjects, were twenty in number—exactly what Chaucer's clerk of Oxenford wished to have at his bed's head. Here is the authoritative list of the books of Lochleven:—*Liber Pastoralis*, *L. Gradualis*, *Missalis*, *L. Origeni*, *Liber Sententiarum*, *Tres Quaterniones de Sacramentis*, *cum Bibliotice (sc. Patrum)*, *Lectionarius*, *Acta Apostolorum*, *Textus Evangelorum*, *Tres Libri Solomonis* (with a Gloss to the Song of Solomon), *Collectio Sententiarum*, *Expositio super Genesim*, *Exceptiones Ecclesiasticarum Regularum*, and what seems to have been an explanatory dictionary—probably of Latin terms. The Pastoral book seems to have been a definition and description of the duties of Priors, etc.; the Gradualis has been explained as a book of Responses; the Missal, a kind of Mass-book; the *Liber Origeni* may have contained the peculiar and debateable doctrines of Origen; and the *Exceptiones*, etc., appears to have been a species of Dispensations or Indulgences. It is interesting to know that while only three books of the Old Testament—"Proverbs," "Ecclesiastes," and "Canticles," with a commentary on "Genesis"—formed part of the library of Lochleven, as many as five represented the New Testament, and that these were the books essential to a correct and full knowledge of the rise and early history of Christianity—viz., the four versions of "The Gospel" and "The Acts of the Apostles."

The purpose of Lochleven Island in the history of Christianity and civilization has long since been

accomplished. The purpose was, indeed, a high and holy one, though it has at no time, perhaps, been sufficiently realised, and is just at present in imminent danger of being lost sight of altogether. Yet no one acquainted with its early history can fail to feel, on visiting it, some portion of that spiritual enthusiasm which Johnson felt when he found himself "treading the illustrious island" of Iona. For here, too, in this bleak Kinross-shire lake, as among the stormy Hebrides, lived and laboured, for no temporal gain or mercenary ends, a band of as devoted disciples of Christ as ever cast a net into the Sea of Galilee, or carried the religion of brotherly love from Asia into Europe. St Serf's Island should be to the Scottish Lowlands what Iona has long been to the Highlands—a shrine of pious memories, where devout hearts (and why not devout feet?) can occasionally rest on life's pilgrimage and be refreshed. Oh why did not Scott, who knew it and its traditions so well—why did not he extend a ray of the romance which he flung around the Castle Island to break the sombreness which broods over St Serf's? The monastic pile, even the hermit cell, was as much a picturesque object to his eye as the lordly tower or the Border peel; the monk and the hermit were as attractive figures to his portraying pen as the knight or mail-clad man-at-arms. Why did not he look with the eyes of his own Fitz-James, and see, as he rode from Blairadam to the eastern terminus of Benarty—

"On yonder *island* far away,
The turrets of a cloister grey"?

L

His was the ear to have heard the sound of vanished bells and long-hushed voices, with which that lonely island was once familiar.

“ And when the midnight moon did lave
Its silver splendour in the wave,
How solemn on *his* ear would come
The holy matin’s distant hum ;
While the deep peal’s commanding tone
Should wake in yonder island lone
A sainted hermit from his cell,
To drop a bead at every knell.”

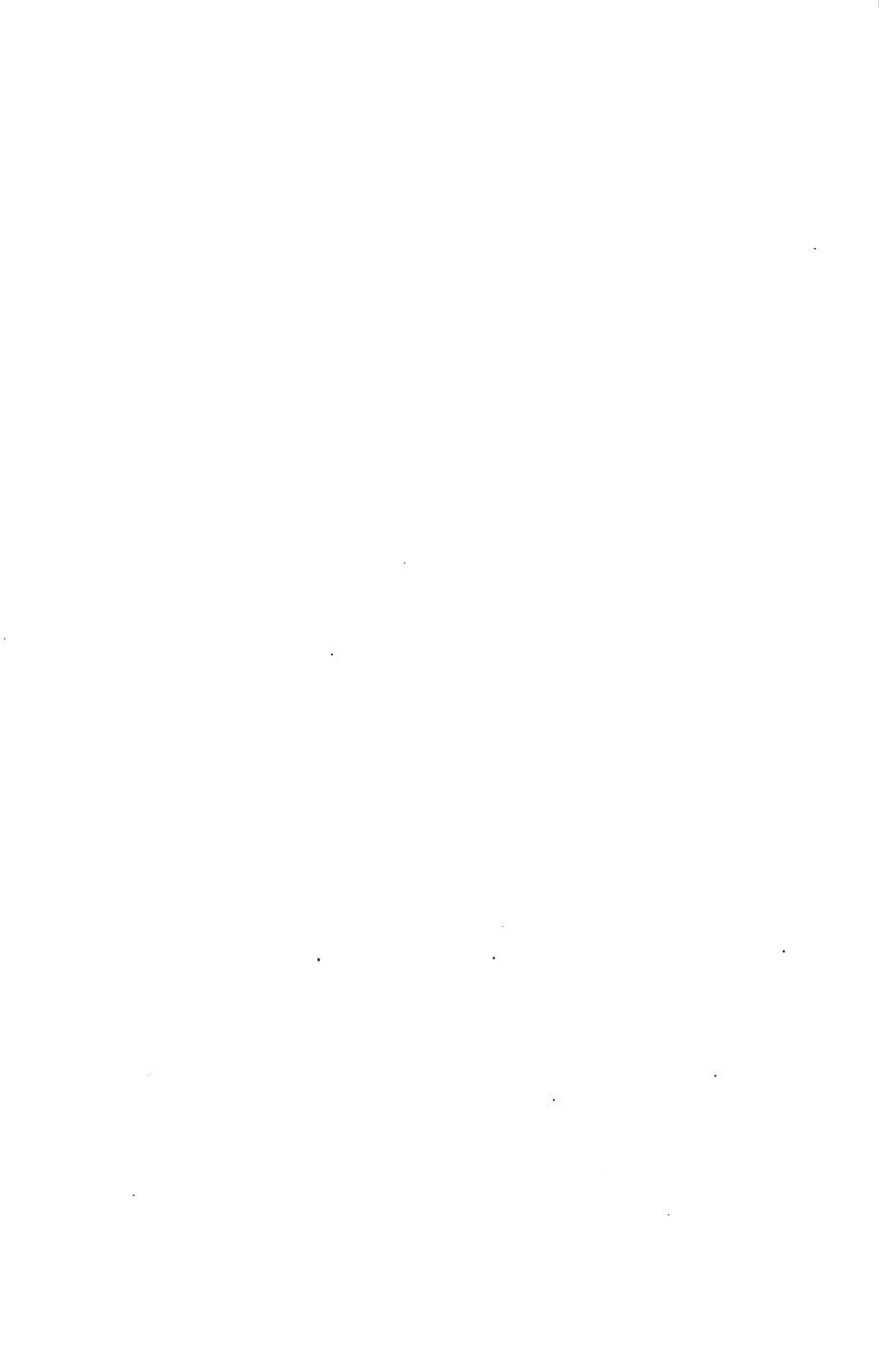
Scott might have told us how St Serf’s looked in the early centuries. How does it look to-day? To me, at least, it is attractive in its desolate bareness. The sigh of the wind is among its windlestraws where the kine are quietly feeding ; the low roar of the loch water keeps it locked in everlasting dream. The clang of the curlew, the complaining cry of the lap-wing, even the dissonant scream of the gull, which float and fly over it, fail to break its reverie. As seen from the nearer shore, it lies low on the water, a drear expanse of withered ling and lake-weed, “ tawny, but with an eye of green in it,” like Shakespeare’s imaginary isle. Round it runs a beach of brown pebbles and small grey sand, from which, as I write, come to my open window, through the calm of noon-tide, the voices of lazy fishermen and the laugh of lurching anglers. One, only one, permanent feature of human interest now appeals to the eye on St Serf’s : it is the ruins of the last priory, now abandoned to base uses—a low, square relic of grey stone, with the darkness of a doorway in its southern wall. But what

a troop of saintly memories quicken into ghostly life,
and throng that silent doorway, when in the imaginative
moonlight that old ruin rouses for a moment
from its long day-reverie !



PART IV.

OF THE POET OF "THE
SEASONS."



THE PORTRAIT OF THOMSON IN THE SCOTTISH GALLERY:

WITH SOME NOTICES OF WILLIAM AIKMAN.

To the lover of Scottish literature the addition recently made of a portrait of James Thomson, the well-known poet of "The Seasons," to the National Portrait Gallery in Queen Street, is an event interesting to know and extremely gratifying to realise. The portrait is a bust, apparently life-size, and presents the poet as he appeared in the heyday of his young manhood and the first flush of his fame. Thomson, it is easily remembered, was born in the last year of the seventeenth century. He began to be talked about in the London coffee-houses in 1726, the year of the publication of his "Winter;" and by 1730, the date of the completed "Seasons," he was generally recognised as the new poet, who, though no disciple of Pope's, was most likely to be his successor. As a matter of historical fact, he is now properly regarded as the most considerable British poet between Pope and Gray, perhaps between Pope and Cowper. This portrait represents him between his twenty-sixth and his thirtieth year. It is apparently the original painting from which were engraved those likenesses of the poet in his youth with which we are familiar in so many

editions of his poems. One finds, however, in the painting something more than colour that is lacking in the engraving. It is a speaking likeness, answering the expectations which his poetry, in general tone or special sentiment, everywhere excite. The face is without fear; it is fresh, frank, and placid; it is expressive of the broad benevolence and cheerful religion of his poetry. The temples are full, the forehead finely arched; it is the brow of a poet. The round, well-opened eyes are less lively than the engraving suggests; they are more thoughtful and tranquil, neither downcast nor upraised, but trustful and restful. It is the lower part of the countenance, however, which chiefly corrects the engraving: here, in the painting, we have an expression of that love of pagan nature, that delight in the fragrance of blossoming bean-fields, that relish—almost vulgar if it were not so childlike in its heartiness—of ripe fruits and rich wines, which was so essential and so pronounced a part of his personality and his poetry. The lips are full and red, as those of a virgin, and harmonise with the eyes in an expression of sensuousness, imaginative power, and tenderness. The chin is short, but not deficient in breadth, and the neck rises round and white from slender, shapely shoulders. The artist was William Aikman, and if this be the portrait which Aikman painted for Lyttelton, and which hung so long at Hagley Park, it is probably deserving the extremely emphatic and favourable, but far from refined, criticism which Pitt passed upon it when he declared it was “beastly like” the poet.

The work of William Aikman as a portrait painter

and his connection with Scottish literature and the literature of Scotsmen in England, are altogether honourable to his memory. His work as an artist during his residence in London, whither he went on the invitation of John, Duke of Argyll, included, if it did not mostly consist in, the delineation of many members of the English nobility; but he is necessarily best known for his portraits of the poets Gay, Somerville, Allan Ramsay, and Thomson. Three of these portraits—Somerville's is the excepted one—it is the good fortune of the Scottish National Gallery at present to possess, and, with the half-length of Patrick, Lord Marchmont, constitute so far the only specimens of Aikman's art which are on public view in this country. His connection with literature was mainly manifested by his preference for the society of poets, and his encouragement of their efforts by commendation and recommendation. He early made acquaintance with "the joyous Ramsay," and Allan was not ungrateful for his generous services:—

"By your assistance unconstrained
To courts I can repair,
And *by your art* my way I've gained
To closets of the fair."

This acknowledgment was made in 1721, and helps to fix the date of the Ramsay portrait, an engraving of which appeared in the quarto edition of Ramsay's collected works. It was this portrait, it may be mentioned, that supplied the necessary basis of Sir John Steell's model for the marble statue of Ramsay in Princes Street Gardens. But years before he painted the poet, Aikman had been praising his

poetry, and securing for it some recognition beyond the circle of the Easy Club ; "with goodwill" he had been "approving his natural lays," and "helping him up the hill." It was therefore only natural that when the painter left Edinburgh to settle in London in 1723, the much-obliged poet should bewail his departure, and recount once more the story of his indebtedness. The lament is in the form of a pastoral dialogue, and contains an interesting reference to the painter's wife :—

"William and Mary never failed
To welcome with a smile,
And hearten us, when aught we ailed,
Without designing guile."

Aikman's general amiability and kindliness of soul are touched off with a happy simplicity of language which becomes the eclogue :—

"A thousand gates¹ he had to win ¹ *ways*
The love of auld and young,
Did a' he did with little din,
And in nae deed was dung."² ² *beaten*

The penultimate line seems to sound the keynote of Aikman's character. His art is alluded to, as is the manner in the allegorising pastoral, with a homeliness of metaphor that may provoke a smile. "Blyth I have stood," says Betty—

"Blyth I have stood frae morn to e'en,
To see how true and weel
He could delyt us on the green
With a piece cawk³ and keel ; ³ *chalk*
On a slid stane or smoother slate,
He could the picture draw
Of you or me, or sheep or gait,
The likest e'er ye saw."

It is hardly probable that Aikman knew Thomson in Edinburgh, though he may have known Thomson's college companion, David Malloch. Malloch was a likely young fellow to force his acquaintance into quarters where he was sure to pick up a benefit, and he might presume on his contributions to the *Edinburgh Miscellany* of the Fair Intellectual Club, even if he had not written the ballad of "William and Margaret," to recommend him to the higher literary circles of which Ramsay and Aikman were members. But Thomson was of a different disposition: he was modest and self-respecting. With scarcely less proved ability and immeasurably greater capacity for poetry than Malloch, he left Scotland in 1725, unnoticed and unmissed by literary Edinburgh; while Malloch's departure the year before was made the occasion of some half-hundred valedictory and complimentary lines by the indiscriminating Ramsay, who "reeced him without reserve," and who, if he had thought of Thomson at all, probably regarded him as one of those that "ne'er advance their stalk aboon their clod." However it may have been in Edinburgh, it is certain that in London, Aikman, Malloch, and Thomson were all speedily on terms of the utmost intimacy. Aikman only required to look on Thomson to love him; there was a sympathy of taste and affection between the two certain to make them life-long friends as soon as it was discovered. Aikman was considerably the older—by some eighteen years; but the friendship was firm; it was a case of like drawing to like, and was independent of the years. Through Aikman, Thomson became acquainted with many of the leading

literary men of his time. An introduction to Arbuthnot would come easily through Aikman; scarcely less easy would be the introduction to Gay; but it is said that Thomson was also presented to Swift and Pope by Aikman. The connection with Pope was a valuable one—not alone for Thomson, but for Pope as well. Indeed, there is no better proof of Thomson's constancy and amiability than is furnished by the fact that in twenty years he never once fell out with Pope, and that Pope was "always at home to Mr Thomson."

In June 1731 William Aikman died suddenly in London, in the middle of a career of unusual success. It is said that grief for the loss of his only son, a youth of seventeen, was the sole and direct cause of his death. The bodies were brought to Edinburgh, and laid in one grave in the Greyfriars Cemetery. The sad, the almost tragic, event was a painful shock to all friends of the beloved painter. Malloch wrote an epitaph which may, or may not, have been sincere; at least it contains no flattery—no unusual element in the rhetoric of epitaphs:—

"Dear to the wise and good, dispraised by none,
Here sleep in peace the father and the son;
By virtue, as by nature, close allied,
The painter's genius, but without the pride,
Worth unambitious, wit afraid to shine,
Honour's clear light and friendship's warmth divine," etc.

Thomson's sorrow was genuine, and his tributary elegy *in memoriam* was from the heart. "All was real," he says of his departed friend, "modest, plain, sincere." But it is the concluding lines of the memo-

rial poem which are of more than historical value—which are, indeed, among the tenderest Thomson ever wrote—certainly his best work in the couplets which Pope brought to such perfection :—

“ As those we love decay, we die in part ;
String after string is severed from the heart,
Till loosened life at last, but breathing clay,
Without one pang is glad to fall away.
Unhappy he who latest feels the blow,
Whose eyes have wept o'er every friend laid low,
Dragged lingering on from partial death to death,
Till, dying, all he can resign is breath.”

The tribute is nobly affectionate, and an eloquent and lasting recompense for Aikman's friendship for Thomson.

It is beside the purpose of this notice to pass judgment on William Aikman's style in painting. It may, however, be mentioned that it was no mere accident, but innate inclination that drew him to the profession of art. The only son of the Sheriff of Forfarshire, he was bred with a view to the Bar ; but early developing an instinct for art, he was suffered by his father to take lessons from John Baptist Medina, a Spanish artist, whom the Earl of Leven had brought to Edinburgh. Some time thereafter, having fallen heir to the estate of Cairney, near Arbroath, he sold the paternal acres, and set out for Rome on a professional visit, from which, after an absence of about five years, with a skill refined by close study and a mind matured by travel and observation, he returned to Edinburgh to practise in 1712. In London, some ten or eleven years later, he came under the influence of Godfrey Kneller,

with whom he lived on intimate terms, and whose style he is believed to have imitated, consciously or unconsciously. His portrait of Gay, the author of the "Beggar's Opera," has already been referred to as the best known, if not the best, example of his pencil.

[One may be permitted to suggest the formation of what might be called a Poets' Corner in the National Portrait Gallery. It might, from the paucity of portraits, be a small—it would undoubtedly prove an attractive—feature of the Gallery; to students of poetry it would save the tedium of searching which is at present necessary.]

THE LAND OF THOMSON.

THE personal history and poetical genius of Burns and Scott have so fully appropriated the region generally known as the Scottish Lowlands that there is scarcely room for the advancement of a claim to any share of it in behalf of Thomson. No one denies his title to rank as a great poet in the history of British literature, and Scotland has maintained for a century and a half an undiminished pride in his attainments :

" Scotia, with exulting tear,
Proclaims that Thomson was her son."

But, unfortunately, his popularity in his native land has not been quickened by the powerful element of personal affection. He is admired and loved for his poetry, but his estimable qualities as a man are little known to his admirers, and his personal history from the very commencement of his fame is almost entirely dissociated from his native country. He lived forty-eight years in all, and the latter and more important half of his term of life was entirely spent in exile from Scotland. During that period of twenty-four years' absence he continued, with characteristic irregularity, only a lazy and lagging corre-

spondence with Dr Cranstoun, of Ancram, and his own sisters. To one of the latter he wrote: "I thought you had known me better than to interpret my silence into a decay of affection. . . . Do not imagine, because I am a bad correspondent, that I can ever prove an unkind friend and brother." He even, with an unusual exertion of the will, half-formed an intention of visiting Scotland at almost the last moment of his life. It is for ever to be regretted that he did not complete and carry out his design. The visit would in all probability have prolonged his life; it would at least have gratified his many Scottish friends, to whom he was fast becoming little more than a famous name; and it might have given occasion to the commencement of that element of personal affection among his countrymen which was the one thing wanting to fulfil his popularity. And yet, notwithstanding his long absence and his long intervals of indolent silence, there is a portion of Tweed basin which both Burns and Scott have left for ever sacred to the memory, and, in some of its aspects, even to the genius of Thomson. There is, as we all know—to use the happy phrase of Hew Ainslie—"the land of Burns," embracing the west country of our Scottish Lowlands from Cart to Solway. There is also the land of Scott, the whole region of the midlands, with Selkirk as centre. To Thomson there remains that tract of the eastern lowlands which, beginning at Ednam, extends over the valley of Kale Water, with its memories of Marlefield, to Jedburgh, and thence up Jed Vale to "Soudan" and the slopes of Cheviot.

It must be owned that while the lands of Scott and Burns are crowded every summer in about equal proportion with thousands of tributary pilgrims, the paths leading to the home shrines of Thomson are forgotten and forsaken. The peculiarity in Thomson's personal history of his long absence from Scotland, and the peculiarity in his poetry of the almost total absence of direct reference to the Scottish scenes, both rustic and rural, which he so graphically depicted, will entirely account for their desertion. None but a foreigner would regard it as a proof of the decadence of Thomson's fame. The *name*, at least, of the author of "The Seasons" is as well known in his native land as that of the author of "Tam o' Shanter" himself. I have found his book, a pious purchase or a pious heirloom, not, indeed, so familiarly and frequently thumbed, but possibly more reverently regarded, in quite as many rural cottages—and sometimes even in houses over which the Scottish Church still "holds the strong hand of her purity," opposing the back o' the loof to unbaptized poetry in general, and the profane rhymes and rant of godless Rab Burns in very special particular. Thomson, too, is still popular—as he has ever been—in our Scottish schools. No school collection of poetry is complete without his redbreast, or his "disastered" shepherd, or his successful angler landing the linn-lier. One is glad that this is so, for the sake of our young folks. For a love for Thomson in early life implies a lasting delight in the phenomena of rural nature, and a ready response in after-years to her restorative influences. The power of such a response in this fiercely competitive and

"hog-shouldering age," this age of town attractions and distractions, is surely a possession of incalculable price ; it belongs to the man whose boyhood has been blest with the spiritual fellowship of Thomson. It is not, therefore, that Thomson is forgotten, or that his popularity is on the wane, which will account for the neglect of visitors to the places in Roxburghshire associated with his personal history. It is that those places are so few in number, and more especially that the traces of his connection with them are comparatively so fragmentary, or faint, or uncertain. The scent—so to speak—lies hot on the numerous traces of Scott and of Burns. It is relatively cold and faint, and is confined to a smaller area, in the case of Thomson.

Much, if not all, of the uncertainty in the personal history of Thomson attaches to that part of his life which is most interesting to Scotsmen, and perhaps most significant to the student whose special delight it is to mark the first unfoldings of poetic genius—the period, namely, of his home life and youthful training. The early Lives of the poet are to blame for this. They were written for Englishmen, and dealt mainly with the latter or English half of his life—the period which is popularly supposed to constitute the whole term of his poetical career. The poet, however, precedes the poem ; and young Thomson rejoiced in the poetical nature before he gave public proof that he possessed the poetical faculty. It is, I fear, impossible now, at an interval of nearly two centuries, to identify distinctly any single scene in his native Teviotdale which directly fired his heart or captivated

his eye. Neither his poems nor his letters will help us much. Everything is vague or general. We have a panorama of "airy mountains," "forests huge," and fertile valleys "winding, deep, and green," with a more specific but still general view of Tweed—

"Pure parent-stream,
Whose pastoral banks first heard my Doric reed,
With, sylvan Jed, thy tributary brook."

We see him, already a young Druid—the part for which, as Collins happily noted, his genius was cast—in the extensive grounds of Marlefield, roving

"Through all the walks and alleys of this grove,
Where spreading trees a checkered scene display,
Partly admitting and excluding day."

We have a glimpse of his young face at the parlour window of Southdean Manse, turned now to the bursting passage of the big torrent at the side of the garden, and now to the deep fermenting tempest brewing in the red evening sky. And there is, in an early letter to his young friend, the village doctor at Ancram, a special reference to some unidentified haugh with which he seems to have been familiar: "I see you in the well-known cleugh, beneath the solemn arch of tall, thick, embowering trees, listening to the amusing lull of the many steep moss-grown cascades, while deep, divine Contemplation—the genius of the place—prompts each swelling awful thought. . . . There I walk in spirit, and disport in its beloved gloom." References such as these furnish our distinctest glimpses of Thomson in Teviotdale. But if we seldom surprise him alighted

in the valley, we feel his presence overflying the entire scene from the kaims of Ednam to the cleughs of Soudan. This is the land of Thomson. The shrines here—they have the advantage to the tourist of easy accessibility, and the recommendation of pleasing surroundings—are Ednam and Widehope, which share between them the honour of being the poet's birth-place; Marlefield, where Jemmy Thomson, schoolboy, may have first met Allan Ramsay, who, as the good folks on Kale Water will probably inform you, came thither for the plot and scenery of his "Gentle Shepherd;" Jedburgh, where, in a school kept in the aisle of the Abbey, young Thomson learned to construe the Georgics; Minto, where he spent very pleasantly, among garden flowers and fragrance, a part of several school vacations; Southdean, the place in Scotland most sacred to his memory, where was his home from his third month to his sixteenth year; and Earlshaugh, in the neighbourhood of Southdean, where he was taught rhyme-craft and tutored for school by a young college-bred farmer—afterwards well known as a minister and a *Marrow* controversialist. We must not overlook the fact that Edinburgh, too, has her share in the development of the talent of Thomson. Here he resided with his widowed mother for about eight years. The history of those years affords glimpses of the young poet and student in various interesting connections; but there is a sad want of many particulars in Thomson's life at Edinburgh on which one would be glad to have information.

EDNAM AND THE THOMSONS.

NEARLY seven hundred years ago, long Thor of Northumbria was presented by Edgar, King of Scotland, for some reason or other now unknown, with a grant of lands on the north side of Tweed. He came up to survey the gift, and to make arrangements for taking possession. As he stood on one of the many "combs" of his newly acquired property, and glanced around him, he may have thought that the royal generosity had been exercised at little expense to the royal treasury. The region was a solitude of water, bog, and gravel bank—

"A waste land, where no one came,
Or had come, since the making of the world!"

A "waste" it certainly was, and so with Saxon bluntness he called it. Is not the ungracious and ungrateful word recorded in the ecclesiastical archives of Durham? Long Thor, however, had the earth-hunger common to his kinsmen, and appropriated the waste. First he peopled it, and then he built a church, and, having thus interested St Cuthbert in the infant settlement, he left the rest to grace and a natural growth. Such was the origin of Ednam or Edenham—the village by the smooth-flowing stream. A village it still remains after the lapse of all those

centuries ; it would neither develop by coaxing nor disappear by bullying. It got a mill, and ground peas and bere so early as the twelfth century ; and though the grist has changed to finer grain in recent times, the mill has hummed all along in village ears only, and purveyed only for village pots and girdles. It got a brewery too, and was doubtless too heartily " beshrewed " for its good ale—at least there is no brewery now. Once, indeed, when James Dickson brought in weaving, and sought to make it a " haunt " for blankets, it seemed to be meditating the step from hamletcy to townhood. The step, however, was not taken. Meanwhile the village went on quietly digging and draining, tilling and " taking-in," till the waste lands of long Thor became desirable estates, and county families like the Edmonstones gathered or grew up in the neighbourhood. In spite of all this coaxing it refused to grow. It was equally reluctant to succumb to bullying. In vain during the old Border warfare did the English sack it, and break it, and burn it ; the villagers clung to their toom cruives and trampled kailyards, and the huts and houses sprung up again like furze that has been fired. It is not, therefore, for commercial growth or industrial prosperity that Ednam is of interest ; even the interest attaching to an ancient historical village such as Ednam is by no means rare in Scotland, or on the Scottish border. The one noteworthy fact of special and more than local interest in its history is of a literary kind, and is associated, however nominally, with the fame of Thomson. Only one other name of national note has ever been mentioned in connection with Ednam,

and the connection is both loose and slender : it is believed that the parents of Captain Cook, the well-known navigator, were long resident in Ednam ; it is not affirmed that their illustrious son ever saw stick or stone of the village, or sailed paper boats on the Eden. Perhaps there is but one other possible object of extraordinary interest in Ednam, which—but entirely in deference to local prejudice—may be mentioned here ; there is the green stump of a wonderful witchelm, which lost its upper bole and branches, blown down by a storm, a few years ago. “It was the auldest tree in Ednam,” said a good woman of the village, with a pathetic “tirl” in her tone, “an’ the only thing Ednam ever had worthy a body’s coming to see. My man an’ me—we couldna force oor fowre haunds to meet round it ! An’ if we gaed on oor knees it’s no fowre pair that’ll gang about it yet !” They speak a beautifully pure doric at Ednam, such as was both a surprise and a pleasure to hear.

Some years ago a brave attempt was made to prove that Thomson the poet was a remote offshoot of a noble family. It is probably possible, especially in a small country like Scotland, to trace at last the connection of the tiniest human twig with some more or less stately genealogical tree ; but the poet, on the paternal side at least, had an immediate origin of obscure though honest ancestry. His grandfather was a gardener in the employment of Mr Edmonstone, who, at the time here referred to—the end of the seventeenth century—was perhaps the most considerable landlord near Ednam. The gardener’s son Thomas became a student and a preacher, and in

July 1692, in his twenty-fifth year, was ordained minister of the parish of Ednam. The parish was what was called a "Crown living," both before that date and for many years after, but at the time, and for the next twenty years, the law of Patronage happened to be in abeyance in the Kirk of Scotland, and the right to appoint was vested in the Protestant heritors of the parish and the members of the Kirk-Session. There can hardly be a doubt that Mr Edmonstone's vote and influence were used in favour of Mr Thomas Thomson, and to a large extent determined the appointment. The appointment was a popular one, and the minister-elect soon acquired a name in his Presbytery for personal piety and diligence in the discharge of pastoral duty. He might have sat for Chaucer's portrait of "a good man of religioun." Like that good man, he was

" A poure persoun of a toun,
But riche he was of holy thought and work."

Like him, too, he was "a lerned man," being a Master of Arts,

" A clerk
That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche ;
His parischens devoutly wolde he teche.
Benigne he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversite full pacient."

Long afterwards the poet spoke of him as "good and tender-hearted." Yet there was a bone in his sleeve—

" Were eny persone obstinat,
What so he were, of high or lowe estat,
Him wolde he snybbe sharply for the nones."

The blended softness and firmness of his character is well illustrated by an incident belonging to the second year of his ministry. He had lent his pony to a parishioner of the name of Muir, and the rascal had so overworked or ill-used it that it died under his charge. Thereupon the minister charged him with cruelty, greed, and ingratitude. Muir retorted, declaring that "he would not be hectored by him, for he was but the offscourings of the earth," and proceeded to curse the minister. For his ill-will and evil words Muir was sisted before the Session, and tholed rebuke ; but it does not appear from the Session Records that he made good to the minister the loss of the pony. To the minister a pony would doubtless be of good service in a parish which, though not wide, was badly provided with roads, and had its houses "fer asonder." But without it

" He ne lafte not, for reyne ne thonder,
In siknesse nor in meschief, to visite
The ferreste in his parissche, moche and lite,
Uppon his feet, and in his hond a staff.
This noble ensample to his scheep he gaf,
That first he wroughte and afterward he taughte ;
Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte."

The Rev. Thomas Thomson was altogether a little over eight years incumbent of Ednam, and seems to have enjoyed a singularly peaceful and popular term of office over all. Muir's ebullition of ill-nature seems to have been the only serious affront that Ednam ever offered to him. One whimsical instance of opposition to religious harmony on Auld Kirk lines may, however, be noted. One of the villagers, though his house

adjoined the church, refused to enter the village fold. A strict Sabbatarian, he never went to church. Either he formed a sect by himself—and he had apparently strength of will enough for such a singularity, or he belonged to a body of believers whose visibility was elsewhere, and of which he was an isolated member. He kept the Sabbath at his own hearth according to a ceremonial of his own. His hours of meditation and holy exercises did not, however, agree with those of the village community. There was the tinkling of the kirk-bell, which drowned his praise. That, however, might be borne. But there were the noises of the people assembling, and worshipping, and departing—and these were both too grievous and too continuous to be borne. He accordingly penned and sent a note of remonstrance to the minister, begging he would take such speedy and effective means with his congregation as would stop their rowting and skirling, and especially their skailing, since it interfered with his observance of the Lord's Day!

Mr Thomson was "called" in August of the year 1700 to the larger and more important parish of Southdean (locally pronounced *Soudan*), in the same shire of Roxburgh, but at the south end. About the same time he received two other "calls" from the neighbouring parishes of Castleton and Morebattle, which we may well regard as good evidence of his popularity as a pastor and preacher. He accepted Southdean, and was admitted on the 6th November. Thither, therefore, from the banks of Eden to the haughs of the upper Jed, the Thomson household was transferred, some time in the end of the last

year of the seventeenth century. Besides the minister himself, the household included, certainly, his wife, and probably four children—but the statement supposes that the dark shadow had not entered the manse at Ednam. The minister had married in October 1693, some fifteen months after his ordination, Beatrix Trotter, one of the daughters of the laird of Wideopen (anciently written *Wydehoipe*), a small estate on Kale Water, in the parish of Morebattle. Of this union, during Mr Thomson's occupancy of Ednam Manse, were born four children—Andrew, in 1695; Alexander, in 1697; Issobell, in 1699; and James, in September 1700. The last was the poet. His age at the time of his father's translation to Southdean was thus only two months, and hardly a day more. Ednam may claim for its old manse—now said to be the dishonoured outhouse of a farmstead—the glory of his birth, leaving the tradition of Kale Water to protest in behalf of the old mansion-house of Wideopen. But the tradition of Kale Water protests too much, for it has set up an actual and no visionary Parnassus with two summits, and claims both “The Gentle Shepherd” and Winter, the first of “The Seasons,” as the inspiration of its own pastoral muse, the local Thalia! Ednam may be allowed to claim the honour of Thomson's birth; if she cannot do this, she must content herself with his baptism—on the 15th September—for he was too short a while in her keeping to derive any poetical benefit from her nursing. Southdean was the nurse of this poetic child.

A FORSAKEN SCOTTISH SHRINE.

"The hinds and shepherd-girls should dress
With simple hands that rural shrine."

—*Collins, adapted.*

THE other morning the present writer found himself, in a thunder-plump of rain, the sole possessor of the country road which leads from Kelso northward to Edenside. Hawthorn hedgerows on each side of him permitted only partial views of the fat haughs of Tweed, but a little beyond these rose, in pleasant relief to the eye, the low wooded heights which in old time had been the river's banks; and still farther off were visible the green kaims of Ednam. On one of those kaims, about half a mile away, seen in blurred outline through the falling shower, a slender spire, overtopping an enclosure of bushy trees that surrounded it, caught "the musing Briton's eyes." Presently skelping round a bend of the road came three noisy school-boys, who found amusement in splashing mud upon each other with their bare feet. Being accosted, while still at a safe distance, by Viator, they ceased mud-larking, and the following colloquy ensued:—

"What kirk is yon on the hill?"

"Eh?"

Question repeated in the same words and tone.

"It's no' a kirk, it's a moniment; Thamson's moniment—Jims Thamson."

"Oh! And what did *he* do?"

"Dinna ken. Think he was a minister. He lived at Ednam."


"Na!" said a younger voice, "he was a *pait*; he made paitry." It was clearly an affected pronunciation, in deference to the stranger.

"Awa, mun!" replied the leading urchin with a toss of mud from his toe, which had the sole merit of being neatly delivered; "a pyot's a bird." And having made contradiction he fled from the response-in-kind which the other was preparing. The third looked on, and laughed, and uttering, as if to himself, "A pait's a powny!" joined in the chase.

Opposite Kelso race-course, which is just over a mile from the town, a narrow by-road (rich in August, with purple vetches and the scent of boor-tree blossom) strikes up to Ferney Hill, on the top of which, at a distance of scarcely more than a furlong from the main road below, stands the slender four-sided pyramid, or obelisk, sacred to the memory of Thomson. Access to the monument from the by-road is gained on the left hand by a raised path, straight as a rule, which separates the adjoining fields, and is protected on one side by a continuous low buttress of masonry. The path, alas! is covered with a crop of coarse weeds, rank and tall, impassable except by rough feet. It is obviously the unused approach to a forsaken shrine. The hallowed enclosure, a square marked off by a low stone wall,

lined with privet and hawthorn and an array of rustling aspens, presents, in the midst of a varied landscape of pastoral loveliness, the dreary solitude and seclusion of a tomb. It is a wilderness of weeds—of sword grass and seeded grasses, nettles and hemlock, amongst which it is a comfort to the heart to spy here and there the woolly white of clover blossom and the enamelled purity of a few mountain daisies. The spot, however, is not all unvisited. Inscriptions of different degrees of rudeness mark the plinth—or rather the pedestal on which the obelisk rests—and indicate by dates, which here and there accompany the names and initials, that even the present decade has furnished a few pilgrims to Thomson's neglected shrine. Can anything excuse those "shapeless sculptures"? Nothing—absolutely nothing, if they deface a work of art. Thomson's monument, however, is substantial rather than elegant, and the penknife attacks upon its substantiality are impotence itself. Let us charitably suppose that they express reverence for the poet, or a desire to be connected with his memory, however faintly and ephemerally. The pedestal of the monument is a cube of solid-built masonry, ten feet on the side, from which rises forty feet into the air what seems to the near spectator to be rather a sky-aspiring pyramid than an obelisk, heavily constructed of white sandstone blocks, channelled horizontally with fine groovings, and grey with the exposure of seventy-four years. The erection dates from the year 1820, and is to be regarded as the outcome and consummation of a pious and patriotic movement in honour of Thomson,

initiated just one hundred years ago, with a ceremonial more common in France than in this country, by David Stuart, Earl of Buchan. Lord Buchan was a man of refined tastes and enlightened patriotism, and endowed to an unusual degree with the perfervid "ingyne" of the Scot. Perhaps he is best remembered to-day for his bold characterisation of Johnson as an "overbearing pedant and bully, whose reputation was proof of the decline of British taste and learning." But he deserves well of his country, if for nothing else, for his just appreciation of Thomson. He may be said to have brought Thomson home, crowned with English laurel, to the full knowledge and regard of his countrymen. The event, a frank act of hero-worship much ridiculed at the time, and smiled at even yet by the frigidity of our own age, took place at Ednam Hill on the 22nd of September 1791. Just ten years previously Johnson had published his *Lives of the Poets*, and in his sketch of the incidents of Thomson's life had proclaimed the supposed poverty of the young poet—his want of shoes—with what may have been a sympathetic recollection of his own early destitution, but which Lord Buchan imagined to be sheer malevolence. It was partly to vindicate Thomson from the supposed aspersions of Johnson that the ceremonial at Ednam Hill was projected. Some may think that abuse of Johnson was as much the object of the celebration as praise of Thomson. It may at least be believed that the publication of Johnson's *Lives* was the more immediate occasion of the solemnity. Numerous invitations were sent out



for the gathering ; amongst others Burns was asked to come "to make one at the coronation of the bust of Thomson," and it was hinted that "his Muse might perhaps *inspire* a suitable ode for the occasion." At this time Burns was preparing to leave the farm of Ellisland for the town of Dumfries. He had already sold the year's crop on his farm—"and sold it very well ; a guinea an acre, on an average, above value." His reply was couched in the following words :—"My Lord,—Language sinks under the ardour of my feelings when I would thank your Lordship for the honour you have done me in inviting me to make one at the coronation of the bust of Thomson. In my first enthusiasm, on reading the card you did me the honour to write me, I overlooked every obstacle, and determined to go ; but I fear it will not be in my power. A week or two's absence in the very middle of my harvest is what I much doubt I dare not venture on. Your Lordship hints at an ode for the occasion ; but who would write after Collins ? I read over his verses to the memory of Thomson, and despaired. I got indeed to the length of three or four stanzas, in the way of address to the shade of the bard, on crowning his bust. I shall trouble your Lordship with the subjoined copy of them, which, I am afraid, will be but too convincing a proof how unequal I am to the task. However, it affords me an opportunity of approaching your Lordship, and of declaring how sincerely and gratefully I have the honour to be, etc.—R. B." The address here referred to is well known—"While virgin spring by Eden's flood," etc. But there is another, a less

known and more characteristic address, which Burns composed within a twelvemonth after the celebration, by no means complimentary of the occasion, and seeming to reflect upon that feature of the Earl's conduct which procured for his memory the harsh sentence of Motherwell, that Lord Buchan was "the most parsimonious of patrons."

"Dost thou not rise, indignant Shade,
And smile wi' spurning scorn,
When they wha wad ha'e starved thy life
Thy senseless turf adorn ?

Helpless, alane, thou clamb the brae
Wi' meikle honest toil,
And claught the unfading garland there,
Thy sair-won richtfu' spoil.

And wear it thou, and call aloud
This axiom undoubted—
Would'st thou have nobles' patronage?
First learn to live without it !


To whom ha'e much, more shall be given,
Is every great man's faith ;
But he, the helpless, needfu' wretch
Shall lose the mite he hath."

The great feature of the celebration was Lord Buchan's oration, which began by flattering the audience—certainly by implication—as an assembly of "men of genius, learning, and taste." It contained at least one shrewd remark, to which Thomson's private correspondence gives some countenance, to the effect that the poet's severance from the ministry of the Scottish Kirk was an essential condition to the growth of his reputation. As a student of divinity his genius was fettered, and he could never have risen

above mediocrity if he had become a Presbyterian minister. Thomson's distaste to the trammels of the Presbyterianism of his day deserves to be emphasized. Even before he left Leith to try his fortune under a new guise in London he thought "the thorny paths of systems and school divinity" fatal to natural cheerfulness and the play of humour; and after ten years' residence in England he wrote of his views of immortality as including "a system not calculated, perhaps, for the meridian" in which his Scottish correspondent, Dr Cranstoun of Ancrum, was living. The speech also contained one happy bit of criticism of Thomson's descriptive power, not—it must be said—very happily expressed: "In his poems, those who are able to taste and relish that divine art which raises the man of clay from the dirty soil on which he vegetates to the heaven of sentiment . . . will delight in seeing the beautiful features of *Nature presented to the eyes as spectators and not readers*, and after these delightful impressions are over, they will find themselves happier and better than they were before." It had been the design of Lord Buchan, as communicated to Burns, to conclude his oration by crowning the bust of Thomson, but the expected bust was not forthcoming. "I have in my hands a copy of 'The Seasons,' which my father received from the author, and on it, since I have not the bust of the poet to invest, I lay this garland of bays." Apparently Burns's stanzas, though duly acknowledged, were not read, the place to which they were entitled—less from their merit than the fame of their author—being surrendered to eleven conventional and imperfect lines, which have too much

honour done them by being even referred to. The copy of "The Seasons" on which the bays were deposited is now in the Edinburgh University Library.

Lord Buchan's gathering at Ednam in the autumn of 1791 proved to be the inauguration of a series of anniversary services in praise of Thomson, held at the same place, more or less regularly, down to the year 1820. In the latter year the monument was erected, and pilgrims could suit the times of their visitation to their own convenience. On a sunken slab of slate on the west side of the pedestal the monument bears the following record:—"In memory of James Thomson, author of *The Seasons*, born at Ednam 11th September A.D. 1700." There is no authority for the 11th, or any other day, as the date of his birth; his baptism took place on the 15th, and it has been inferred that his birth was probably on the 7th. The Session Book of Ednam has no testimony to offer on this interesting point, though it records the baptism.




THOMSON AT SOUTHDEAN.

AN unexpected depression of considerable area in the south of Roxburgh, a county remarkable for the incessant unevenness of its surface, bears the appropriate name of Southdean, anciently and still locally pronounced *Soudan*. It lies at the foot of the Cheviots, here represented by the broad-shouldered majesty of Carter, and is enlivened, if it was not created, by the upper Jed, which, increased by the tribute of a hundred petty strypes and torrents, now begins to sweep onward with something of the stately movement characteristic of its lower course, past red scaurs overhung with adventurous verdure, to its union with silver Teviot, the noblest affluent of Tweed. From the centre of this "dene," or hollow, the open view all round gives to the mind a sense of freedom which the narrow, winding dales of the country, rich though they are in the production of other delightful sensations, deny; at the same time, there is the charming accompaniment of a feeling of restful seclusion, as of a prying and clamorous world shut out behind and below the horizon of distant mountain barriers. Here are neither mines nor manufactures, towns nor trade. The nearest railway—at Hawick on the west, at Jedburgh on the north

—is some eight or ten miles away, and not likely soon to come nearer. It is a happy valley, still retaining at the close of the nineteenth century, uncontaminated by art, undisturbed by avarice, the peace and purity of its primitive pastoralism. Previously to its possession by shepherds, it was part of the great forest of Jedwood, the haunt of boars and wolves and innumerable deer, giving refuge to run-aways and outlaws, and a sylvan home to robbers, and having its solitudes of glade and greenwood alarmed from time to time by an invasion of hounds and hunting-horns, or the sterner cries of Border battle. Not seldom the hunt was prelude to the battle. Chevy Chase was here; and here the Douglas was wont to exercise his limbs and replenish his larder, to the envy of his English neighbour and rival, the gallant Percy. From coveting—as everybody knows—Percy took to claiming a share in the pleasures and treasures of the Chase, and bravely vowed, according to the old ballad, that he would hunt in the mountains of Cheviot, within three days, maugre the doughty Douglas and his men. Douglas swore he would “let” that hunting. They still point you the place where, half a millennium ago, the Scottish Earl mustered his men in defence of his exclusive rights to the Chase, and in redemption of his oath; it is identified with the churchyard of Southdean Parish. Peaceful times only came with the Union: the hollow was gradually cleared of its beeches and oaks and more prevailing pines; rural industry settled among farms and bleating folds where erst the foot of the hunter and forayer had

hastily passed ; and the true golden age, thus timidly inaugurated, tarries in Southdean still.

The year 1700 was wearing to its close—it was the month of November—when to this happy hollow among the uplands of the south of Scotland came, as minister of peace to its pastoral people, the Rev. Thomas Thomson, then in the full maturity of his manhood. He came from Ednam, where he had just passed the first eight years of his professional life, and where he had acquired such a name for diligence and devoutness that no fewer than three parishes were desirous of securing his services when he decided to accept of the congregational “call” to Southdean. His household at this time consisted of a wife, and a family of small children, the youngest only two months old. This infant was the future author of “The Seasons.” He was the fourth of nine children, of whom five were born at Southdean ; and as Southdean was his own home continuously for fully the first fifteen years of his life, excepting only those two months of earliest infancy, one might almost accredit Southdean with the honour usually attaching to places of illustrious nativity, and regard it as the parent-home of Thomson—this the more readily that there is real doubt about the actual spot and even parish of his birth, some biographers of the poet claiming for Ednam, others—fewer in number but probably better informed—declaring for Wideopen. One is on sure ground at Southdean. Here, in the old thatched cosy manse, and in the pastoral fields around it, were spent his childhood and boyhood. Within were those kindly influences only to be



found in a true home, and seldom absent from a well-filled Scottish manse, which are the heart's best education; without, such variety of natural scenery as, under the transforming power of seasonal differences, might well excite the attention and kindle the youthful imagination. There can be as little doubt that the wide sympathy and noble benevolence of heart which distinguished alike the conduct, the correspondence, and the poetry of Thomson were developed in the manse of Southdean, as that his love of Nature, and faith in her supreme goodness, grew up, to become a part of his very being, among the fostering solitudes of that pastoral parish. A more likely region in respect of natural capabilities for the creation of a poet of Nature it would not be easy to find.

It has been remarked by a careful observer that the scenery around Mantua bears in summer a striking resemblance to the scenery of Southdean. The remark is an interesting one; and we can well believe that the spirit which pervades the "Georgics" and the kindred spirit which animates "The Seasons" derived their common bent and bias, their inspiration and aspiration, from early and close acquaintance with scenery similar in beauty, variety, and the charm of pastoral repose. The interest that would fain effect a connection between Mantua and Southdean is increased when one considers that Virgil was probably the first poet to engage the fancy of young Thomson; that, as a student on holiday in the long vacation, a copy of the Mantuan's poems was his pocket companion in angling excursions on the Jed; and that, when Thomson was travelling in Italy, "the

Wm. Bayne in
his James
Thomson p. 25

fields where Virgil gathered his immortal honey "were a principal object of his quest. With him, all life long indeed, Virgil was a first favourite: he was quite willing to take or mistake him for the god of poetry:

"Behold who yonder comes in sober state,
Fair, mild, and strong as is a vernal sun!
'Tis Phoebus' self, or else the Mantuan swain."

Most students of Thomson will allow that the qualities which he so much admired in the genius of Virgil were no inconsiderable part of the charm of his own. And what he was as a poet he was as a man. His sober state, his fairness, mildness, and easy strength were sufficiently pronounced to be characteristic of his conduct and disposition.

The scenery at Southdean is the same to-day in all essential features as it was in the early part of last century. The visitor may see what Thomson saw, and he may be certain that much of what he sees is viewed from the very standpoints which the poet actually in his boyhood, and afterwards in imagination, often occupied. The modern manse, *simplex in munditiis*, a model of neatness and snugness, occupies the site of the old one, and, it may be added, maintains its reputation as a home of worth, learning, and hospitality. Hidden, nest-like, among embowering trees, it looks from a natural lawn of smoothest, softest green southwards and upwards to the great Border barrier of Cheviot. Standing in the doorway, you find right above and in front of you Carter Fell, filling a considerable arc of your horizon. There, you say to yourself, and from this very spot, or

perhaps, more comfortably for November, from the parlour window, young James Thomson

“Saw the deep-fermenting tempest brew’d
In the red evening sky.”

The Jed is on your left, at no great distance; you can hear its murmur as it sweeps along past the manse garden, under a low green “continent” bank which wards off the wilderness. Within the charmed circle of its sound young Thomson, the nursling of careless solitude, ran and played many a summer day; but it was the winter note of Jed that woke the deepest chord of his imagination: with a sublime pleasure, among kindred glooms and congenial horrors, he

“Heard the winds roar, and its big torrent burst.”

The garden enclosure has its own peculiar interest; it was on some part of its frozen ground that the young boy-poet on the last afternoon of the old year regularly sacrificed, with fire and shouts of joy, his verses of the preceding twelvemonth. He could have subjected his art and genius to no better discipline. There was a magnanimity in the act rare among young poets, but characteristic of Thomson. Till lately, too, there stood in the garden, some twenty yards from the manse door, an aged hawthorn, at the root of which, as local tradition reports, the young poet would sit in the fine weather, to read or to muse and “meditate his rural minstrelsy.” A single fragment of the poet’s tree still survives in the form of an inkstand, and is perhaps the only relic of a distinctly personal kind which Southdean now possesses of

James Thomson. Beyond the garden the traces of Thomson, as revealed now by his poetry and now by his personal history, are, if more indefinite, scarcely less interesting. On yonder hillside you may see "the shining day" reflected from "wandering streams high-gleaming from afar"—a phenomenon which Thomson could only have seen at Southdean. Over this brae, making a short cut for the manse, he was seen returning a truant from College, almost as soon as the servant who had carried him to Edinburgh the day before. In that deep pool, to which the grassy wilderness dips gradually, you may see at the season the sheep-washing and shearing going on in all their idyllic details, exactly as they are described in his "Autumn." Here was his path for many a day to school. In that other direction he walked to the farmhouse of Earlsbaugh with his last copy of verses in his pocket, to receive thereon the judgment of John Riccaltoun, a college-bred farmer, and his friend. On Swinnie Moor, near by, may have occurred the historical incident of his perishing shepherd. And where, but in hill-encircled Southdean, had the young poet his impressive vision of the moon-lighted world, so exquisitely described in these six or seven wonderful lines of "Autumn"?—


"Now through the passing cloud she seems to stoop,
Now up the pure cerulean rides sublime ;
Wide the pale deluge floats, and streaming mild
O'er the skied mountain to the shadowy vale,
While rocks and floods reflect the quivering gleam,
The whole air whitens with a boundless tide
Of silver radiance, trembling round the world."

The world has had many pictured editions, each,

if possible, less truly illustrative than another, of Thomson's "Seasons": why has no one thought of embellishing the poet with the very scenes which suggested his poetry? [The parish of Southdean either itself furnishes, or is the platform from which one may behold, the fugitive originals of scores of Thomson's well-known scenes. His utter truthfulness to nature is the astonishing thing in those scenes. Sometimes he elaborates, not seldom he idealises, but in numerous instances he has simply lifted the scene from Southdean and laid it in his "Seasons," with as much apparent ease and completeness as one transfers a rare flower or fern-leaf to his portfolio.] It is a new pleasure to the student of Thomson to identify those originals: sufficient to him the unadorned and simple text; he has but to raise his eyes from the enchanting page as he walks at leisure through the vale of Southdean to find in those originals the best possible illustrations of his poet. They provide both illustration and commentary. One may have been familiar with Thomson's poetry for years, and yet have a new light shed upon it by a visit to Southdean. It is true of all poets that a fuller and more lively knowledge of their genius is to be acquired by acquaintance with the scenic and social circumstances of their early life; it is especially true of a descriptive poet, or poet of Nature—such as Thomson. One of the most important revelations of a visit to Southdean is the distinctly national character of Thomson's genius; he was a Scottish poet, not merely by birth and upbringing, but in theme and thought as well. His language was English, because his eye was on the English market.

quoted by Wm.
Bayne, James
Thomson p. 27

The education of young Jemmy Thomson was probably continued at his home in the old manse of Southdean till he reached the age of twelve, his parents being his teachers. It is, of course, possible that he attended, for a longer or shorter period, the little local school which may have been kept at Chesters, a small roadside hamlet not half a mile from the manse, and which must have existed to supply the educational wants of the young rustics of the district. Here he was taught to read and write and cipher, and, being a son of the manse, was doubtless duly instructed in the Scriptures, and got entangled in the intricacies of the Latin grammar. This was probably the extent of his efforts in systematic study during the period of his first schooling; but much the more valuable part of his training at this early stage was independent of books. His chief, if not his only, playmates were his brothers and sisters; and intercourse with them in all the intimate relations of domestic life, under the gentle surveillance of a pious father and a sensible and affectionate mother, developed that disposition to sociality and that consideration for the happiness of others, which, in spite of an indolent habit which crept upon him in middle age, remained characteristic of his nature to the end. The education of his heart was from the first a strong and steady growth of the best qualities of humanity. His life's record shows a remarkable freedom from vanity and selfishness. He envied no one, and was blind to the jealousy of others. Probably no poet, without exception—not even Goldsmith—had so few enemies. He lived amicably with the self-seeking Malloch;



greatest feat of all, he preserved due self-respect and maintained an unbroken intimacy with Pope. A genial and steady benevolence was the first feature of his morality. He hated none—unless his dislike for a certain class of lawyer, which crops out, not once or twice only, in his poetry, can be construed as personal and implacable. Without Burns's occasional disposition to satire, he had an equal width, though scarcely his impetuous warmth, of sympathy. And he had precisely the same rule for estimating manhood.

Next to the education of his affections at Southdean must be placed the education of his senses. Here Nature was his schoolmistress, and her method was that of object-lessons. Never had the wise old lady a readier pupil. Her lessons were his delight; and it would be difficult to say which of them pleased him best. Winter was a joyous experience; spring never came a day too soon, nor went away a day too early; summer and autumn were equally welcome with the other seasons. Perhaps, upon the whole, autumn was his favourite season; it was the season of his birth; its tranquillity was congenial with his deeper nature; its fulness responded to the benevolence of his desires. All natural objects, however presented to his notice, were narrowly observed and faithfully remembered. He examined the individual with microscopic minuteness; but he loved especially to group them, and study the effect of their mingled masses. To the charms and sublimities of form he was keenly sensitive; but he revelled in colour. His redbreast on the parlour floor, or his bull in the broom, has the fidelity of a photograph; but it has movement and the hues of


life which a photograph wants. From such vignettes and pastoral views he ranges with easy sweep to the dimensions of a hemisphere ; his forest covers a continent, his flood becomes "a shoreless ocean tumbling round the globe." But Nature's education of his senses was not limited to vision. His ear was not less accurately trained. The felicity of his epithets as suggestive of the sounds and noises, the melodies and discords, of Nature, is as noticeable as the picturesqueness of his draughtsmanship and colouring. Numerous instances of it will occur to every reader of "The Seasons" or "The Castle of Indolence." Not less than his verbal melodies, the more intricate harmonies of his verse recall the concerted notes of Nature. When everything has been said about the pomposity of Thomson's line, it must at last be owned that it is the "pomposity" of Nature. His style, on the whole, is in admirable keeping with his subject. It is part of his interpretation of Nature, and not merely the vehicle of that interpretation.

Smell, taste, and touch are not generally regarded as so fit for poetical treatment as the more ethereal sensations of sight and hearing. They are, however, scarcely the less capable of ministering delight, and their cultivation and indulgence enter with effects too important to be ignored into the education of the poetical nature. Thomson's whole nature was keenly sensuous ; he had a wholesome and catholic delight in fragrances, from the overpowering perfume of bean-fields in blossom to the fine aroma of the lily of the valley. He could hardly fail to find all the pleasure in flowers which his senses could admit. His father

was a gardener's son, and had probably a practical knowledge of gardening. We read of gardeners among the poet's uncles and nephews; we know that his garden at Richmond was a great solace to him, and that it gave one if not two of his kinsmen, who had been bred gardeners, a kind of excuse for "sorning" on him. They were supposed to keep his garden; he certainly bore the expense of keeping *them*. Whatever charges he was put to by their maintenance—and he probably never dreamed of calculating—he was amply recompensed by the sight and scent of his dusty millers and damask roses. His love of fragrance was equalled by his love of fruit. It was a boy's relish, which he never lost. His delight in what was tangibly soft, or smooth, or in any way, actually or suggestively, pleasant to the sense of feeling, is no less noticeable to a careful reader of his earliest and latest verse. Nowhere, perhaps, does he bring before one in such small compass the feeling, fragrance, and taste of ripe fruit, with so much suggestiveness of its actual appearance and qualities, as in some lines of his "Autumn." How deliciously chosen for their very sound are the words—

"The juicy pear
Lies in a soft profusion scattered round;
A various sweetness swells the gentle race."

While these are described as "melting" from the deep-loaded bough in mellow showers in the sun, "the fragrant stores, the wide-projected heaps of apples" are represented as "falling frequent through the chiller night."



"A various spirit, fresh, delicious, keen,
Dwells in their gelid pores, and active points
The piercing cider for the thirsty tongue."

Never has artist so nicely discriminated the virtues of apple and pear. Like the picture of Zeuxis, the description imposes on the mind; it almost gratifies the senses through the imagination.

The education of the senses—so absolutely necessary in youth to a poet of Nature—was in Thomson's case happily begun and well advanced at Southdean; was, doubtless, continued at Jedburgh, once famous for the flavour of its Abbey pears; further supplemented at Minto and Chesters-on-Teviot, and at Marlfield-on-Kale; and perfected among the richer garden and orchard landscapes of Southern England, of which Ham and Eastbury may serve as samples. Surely no poet of Christendom, not even Keats, luxuriated so voluptuously in the pagan charms of Nature. The zest with which he apostrophised and ate his pine-apple is emblematical of his life-long attitude to the sensuous delights of the physical world; it has all the frankness of a pagan's or a boy's—which, to be sure, is the same thing.

11 *Summit* "Quick, let me strip thee of thy tufty coat,
Spread thy ambrosial stores, and feast with Jove!"

The youthful imagination of Thomson was first touched and awakened at Southdean by the romance of Nature. The romance of history, which is such a potent factor in the dream-world of boyhood, seems to have scarcely influenced his youth. Even from the romance of superstition, of legend and

fable, he was comparatively free. Yet he was born at a time and in a locality singularly favourable to the full influence of both. It was an age when belief in fairies and goblins, ghosts and devils, was general; and when it was the universal practice among country folks to spend part of the interminable winter fore-nights of enforced *idleset* in recounting the heroic traditions and tragedies of their national history. Burns came a couple of generations after Thomson, and in his time that belief and that practice were not more prevalent than they had been in Thomson's. Their influence upon his poetical faculty Burns has himself acknowledged: "In my infant and boyish days I owed much to an old woman who resided in the family, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poetry, but had so strong an effect on my imagination that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look-out in suspicious places." In the same letter from which I quote he further declares that the *History of Sir William Wallace* was one of two books read in his boyhood that gave him more pleasure than absolutely any others. It "poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins which will boil along there till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest." With good store of Betty Davidsons in

Scotland even yet, there seems to have been no Betty Davidson, or other crone or carline, haunting Southdean Manse in the early part of last century, who might have inveigled young Thomson to the door of the supernatural world, and startled his innocent sedateness with suggestive visions of *diablerie* and the dim world of fairyland. The minister probably took care to prevent all that. To him the Prince of Darkness and his scarcely less ubiquitous liege devils, not to mention the subsidiary agencies of local ghosts, witches, and water-wraiths, were Bible truths and terrible Scottish realities—not to be alluded to lightly, not to be wantonly provoked or rashly encountered. It was the superstition of his age, the dark feature of our earlier Presbyterian piety and devotion. Parental affection may have shielded the childhood of young Thomson from those grim credos. He seems, at least, to have passed his boyhood, his first fifteen years, free from any care or curiosity about the supernatural. The gloom of the woods and glens of Southdean held no mysterious terror for that happy period of his life; and he rather rejoiced in the roar and hurry of the flooded Jed, and kept safely beyond the sweep of its waters. No diseased thought of what might inhabit the darkness of tortured air or water paled his plump cheek; he rambled boldly, drinking in at every sense the pure pleasures of the rural life. His was the unhesitating step, the shining brow, the health-hued cheek, the full, round-eyed fearlessness of thriving boyhood. Ignorant or careless of the supernatural, he could give his undivided attention to the wholesome object-

ivities of the physical world. It is no objection to this theory of the fearlessness of his earlier youth-time that in his poems he refers to superstitious horror creeping over rustics gathered by winter hearths to the entertainment of some goblin story; or that he gives a moonlight glimpse or two of soft-embodied fays streaming like a dream through distant woods,

“Or o’er some flood all silvered with their gleam.”

He speaks, too, of ghosts yelling in graveyards; and once he seems to make allusion to the groans of the water-wraith as warning the belated wanderer of woe and death. But the dread, at least, if not also the knowledge, of vulgar supernaturalism did not enter his imagination till boyhood was over; and it soon passed from him as a terror, and became transmuted by his own common-sense and the purifying influence of a natural religion into a pleasing belief in the harmlessness or benevolence of the invisible world. Truly may we regard his own words as applicable to Southdean—

“Pleased did I, in my cheerful morn of life,
When nursed by careless solitude I lived
And sung of Nature with unceasing joy—
Pleased did I wander through your [loved] domain.”

His history, his disposition, his poetry, even his expression of countenance, all bear testimony that the fifteen years of his boyhood, passed almost continuously at Southdean, were in all respects and relations a singularly happy time. And more truly, if that be possible, was Southdean the indisputable place of his poetical nativity. Where but at South-

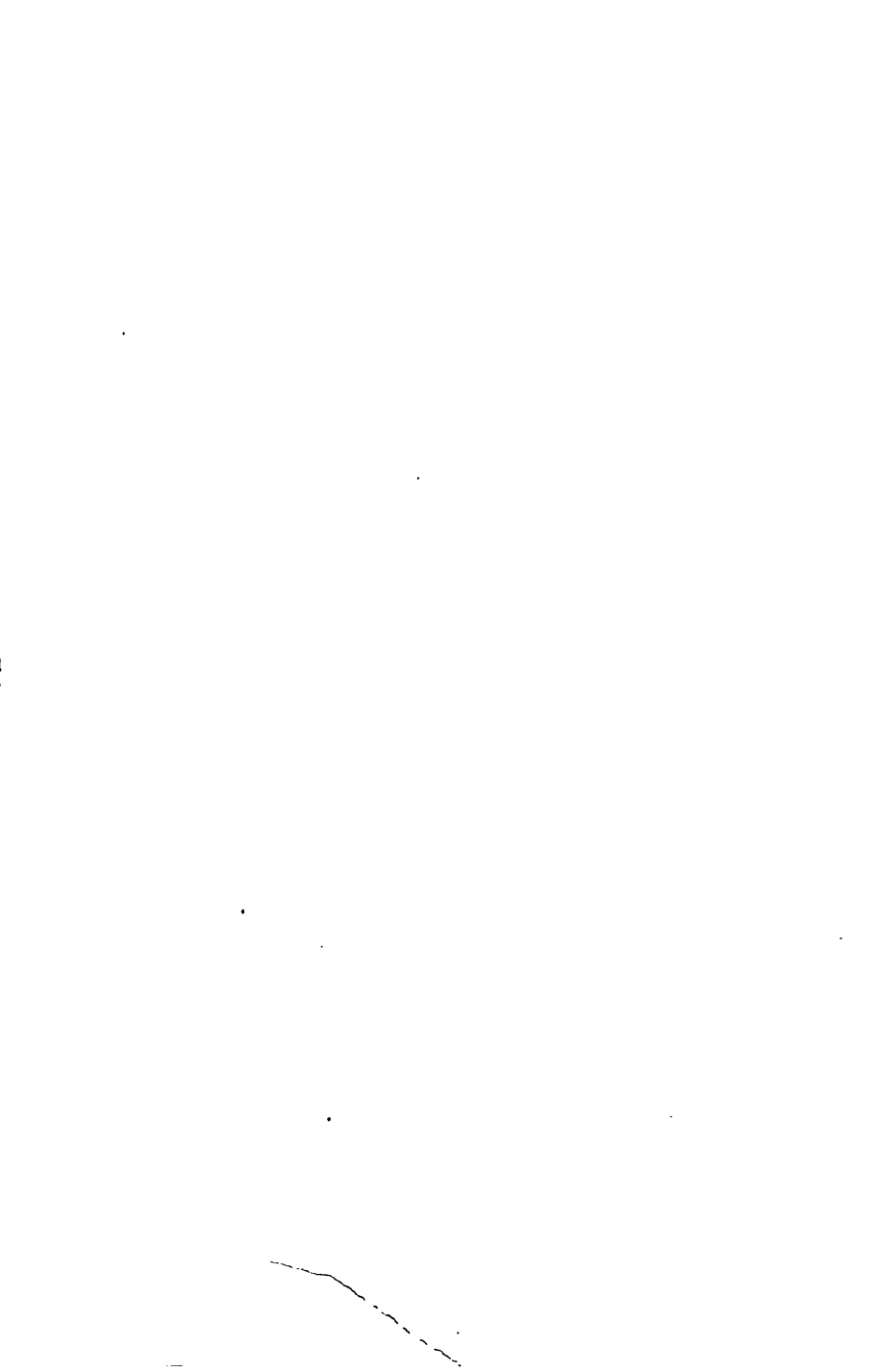
dean was the "careless solitude" that nursed him, gave him his first taste of the joys of Nature, and made him, while still a mere schoolboy, a poet in heart and mind?

The patriotic feeling was strong in Thomson's heart; none that reads him closely can doubt it; but it was a love for the land rather in its geographical than its historical aspects. The associations of his own early life doubtless made it dear to him; doubtless, too, the heroism exemplified by Wallace in ancient times, and by "the good Argyle" in his own, was viewed with true Scottish reverence and admiration; but, more than the history of its "battle mounds and Border towers," his recollection of its scenes of rural life and rustic sociality, viewed idyllically through his own poetical imagination, was the main and overmastering element of his patriotism. It was by no means aggressive. Intrusiveness—formerly and upon the whole still characteristic of the patriotism of the common Scot—is indeed entirely absent from Thomson's character and poetry as a patriot. It is wrong to seek the explanation in the circumstance of his residence among Englishmen. He was no renegade like Malloch—or Mallet, as he called himself, to make his name palatable to the Southron. It was simply the natural outcome of his genius and disposition. He loved his country because he found it lovely, and because it was his first love; and its people because he liked them best, and had been early familiar with them. To him, in the language of Scott, it was the nurse of his poetical childhood—the meet nurse for any poetic child. Long experience of

English folks left him, as it had probably found him, a believer in the equality of Scottish to English manhood, and in the superiority of Scottish womanhood. Here he differs from Goldsmith, who in some points of genius, disposition, and even personal history, rather resembles him. "Summer" offers as generously sincere a tribute to the English character as even "The Traveller"; but not to the neglect of Scottish worth, which, if the notice is delayed, is at last duly honoured in "Autumn." "Britannia too," he wrote to a fellow-countryman, "includes our native kingdom of Scotland." And it was Britannia, one likes to remember, that received Heaven's commission to rule the waves. There is peculiar satisfaction to every Scottish heart in the fact that when Thomson wrote the grandest of our naval anthems, Scotland, too, was in his thought.

"When Britain first, at Heaven's command,
Arose from out the azure main,
This was the charter of the land,
And guardian angels sung the strain—
Rule, Britannia ! rule the waves ;
Britons never will be slaves !"

Strains like these, and the influence of poets like Thomson, have made us the united nation we are,



PART V.

OF BURNS IN A NEW ASPECT.

BURNS THE POET OF THE COUNTRY.

MORE than any other poet, Burns was a son of the soil. He was a phenomenon in the city, and suffered by the change. His health and strength and inspiration were drawn from rural sources. One does not need to read far into his poems to perceive this. To know it, a knowledge of the outward history of his life is unnecessary. There is the smell of corn-rigs, and furrowed fields, and fragrant hedgerows diffused like a straying wind through all his poetry. The man who so freshly employed the symbolism of Nature in the utterance of his thoughts was a dweller in open country spaces, with nothing between him and the presence of the mighty mother. Nature was not far off, but near to him ; her imagery was no recollection ; he was in the midst of it. True to the letter is his own simple statement—how unnecessary it is!—"The Poetic Genius of my country found me . . . at the plough, and threw her inspiring mantle o'er me. She bade me sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes and rural pleasures of my natal soil."

Burns was a constant dweller in fields and farms for thirty-two years. His life in their open spaces is no mere figment, it was veritable fact. He mostly ate and slept under a roof, but he met the majority of the

four-and-twenty hours in the open. The merry lark was his clock—it has been the ploughman's from time immemorial. He found his calendar in the signs of the seasons. By them he dated his epistles. The sons of prose give month and day in dry almanac fashion. But with Burns it was—

“ While briers an’ woodbines budding green,
An’ pairicks scaichin’ loud at e’en,
An’ morning poussie whiddin’ seen,
Inspire my muse ; ”

or—

“ While new-ca’d kye rowte at the stake,
An’ pownies reek in pleugh or braik ; ”

or—

“ While at the stook the shearers cow’r
To shun the bitter blaudin’ show’r ; ”

and then the news of the epistle begins. The new style of counting poetical time, introduced in this delightful way by Burns, was a great advance upon the manner of the old *makers* from Chaucer to Thomson. That manner was to send the eye rolling in a fine frenzy from earth to heaven, and seize upon some sublimity of the zodiac with which to mark the time o’ day. Chaucer’s pedantry in his uninspired moments is simply insupportable, but he had the genius to anticipate in the opening of his immortal “Prologue” the natural style of Burns. Thomson’s sun rolling from Aries, and being received by the bright Bull, has only sonorousness to recommend it. In this, too, as in other respects, Burns brought poetry down from heaven to earth, glorified with it the monotony of unpoetical lives, and made it fit and showed its strength for daily work and wear.

This robust, open-air life, conducive to strong thoughts and true feelings, was relieved now and again by a short session of indoor study, or diversified by a dip into tavern sociality. Poetry he both studied and practised in the field—everybody has heard of that collection of verses which was his *vade mecum* behind the plough and beside the cart ; but philosophy and divinity demanded undivided energy, and were for the fireside and the elbow-chair. Now it was

“Smith, wi’ his sympathetic feeling,
And Reid, to common-sense appealing ;”

and now it was a trinity of reverend B’s that kept him pondering “butt the house” :—

“My shins, my lane, I there sit roastin’,
Perusing Bunyan, Brown, and Boston.”

And occasionally, it must be confessed, he stayed indoors to rest a fatigued body, and if possible, compose a mind ill at ease with itself and its activities. There can be little doubt that his fits of mental depression were largely the result of overwork. He was not the man to spare himself—could not if he would. He “threshed the barn” like a brownie, and was content with the brownie’s recompense, or little more—the creambowl and a “lean” by the kitchen fire. In his despondent humiliation he would have sunk into the ignoble content of the brownie altogether ; he was on the point of forswearing poetry as the cause of all his woe ; he had heaved on high his waukit loof preparatory to taking the oath ; when such a “Vision” as never visits the eyes of brownies

appeared before him in the smoky spence, to re-assure his heart and comfort him with a peep into futurity.

All Burns's best work as a poet was done in the open air. If this is so, it was an evil day that brought him into town, and restricted him to the distracting monotony of streets. The Bannockburn Ode, "Tam o' Shanter," the address to "Mary in Heaven," the "Death and Dying Words of poor Mailie" are characteristic specimens of his genius. They were, as is well known, composed not only in the country, but in the open air, and in circumstances as varied as their subjects. The imagery of their special circumstances shows in two of them. The lingering star with lessening ray actually shone upon the composition of the hymn; and the war ode, as Carlyle points out, should be sung with the strength of the storm that manifestly inspired it—with "the throat of the whirlwind!" The poetical productivity of Burns was another feature of his life in the country. Not only did residence in town reduce the quality of his poetry, it checked its amount as well. The quantity of artistic work that Burns turned off in the country is simply marvellous, when it is viewed in a proper light. It cannot, of course, be forgotten that much of it was produced while his hands were busy with the heavy implements of agricultural toil, or at odd moments of necessary or enforced idleness and leisure. Now it is "lie" time in the harvest field:—

" I'm bizzie, too, and skelpin' at it,
But bitter, daudin' showers hae wat it,
Sae my auld stumpie pen I gat it
Wi' muckle wark,
An' took my jocteleg an' whatt it
Like ony clark."

Another time it is the hour "on e'enings' edge" that is taken to answer a correspondent's letter. We certainly owe something to the bad weather which, while it forbade field work, favoured the composition of those poems. With more leisure, or—which is the same thing—with less necessity for such close and continuous manual work as the bondage of the farm required, Burns, there can scarcely be a doubt, would have written more poetry; and there is no reason to believe that the increase would have been at the expense of the quality. It is indeed a significant thing in the history of the poet that his most productive were his most poetical years. Perhaps the most productive year of his life was the year 1786; the number of pieces which he threw off in that year was something like sixty, an average of rather more than one piece per week; yet plentiful though the year's supply was, it included such excellent specimens of his art as "The Twa Dogs," "The Author's Earnest Cry," "The Ordination," the "Epistle to James Smith" (in some respects the best and most delightfully discursive of his rhymed epistles), the "Address to the Unco Guid," "The Vision," "The Holy Fair," "To a Mountain Daisy," "The Brigs of Ayr," "The Gloomy Night," "The Winter Night," and "The Bard's Epitaph." Some of these poems are over two hundred lines in length. Few poets, that were indeed poets and not mere "metre-ballad mongers," have shown such astonishing fecundity. Now it was the year in his country life in which he felt warranted in allowing himself most literary leisure. By the middle of it he had made up his mind to

break with his whole wretched past. He would give up farming—which seemed indeed to have given him up, escape from the evil repute in which the unco guid of his parish held him, and leave a country which he loved, but which was too poor or too parsimonious to allow him a livelihood. He was arranging matters for a final leave-taking. Gradually his industry on Moss-giel slackened. He hurried a volume of his poems through the Kilmarnock press. With part of the proceeds of the sale of his book he bought a steerage ticket to the West Indies. As the ship from time to time delayed sailing, he found himself in the unaccustomed position of a man with leisure. This leisure time he devoted to poetry, and perhaps in the whole course of his life he was never more favourably placed for the production of poetry than in the months of October and November of this memorable year. He felt the pressure of conflicting feelings with an acuteness he had never felt before, and was never again to feel. His position and feelings he has himself described in his "Farewell to the Banks of Ayr." It was written one day in October, but is expressive of his outcast condition from the beginning of August till the end of November. The publication of his book did not stop his poetical industry. He was as busy in the autumn of 1786 as when in the spring and the summer he fed the press of the Kilmarnock printer. And this activity continued till, in the end of November, he left the country and repaired to Edinburgh. He stayed in and hovered around Edinburgh for a year and a half, producing now and again, in the course of one or other of his flights from

the capital for a mouthful of country air, a set of rattling verses like "Willie's Awa'," or a snatch of song like "The Birks of Aberfeldy," in some degree worthy of the poetical work done at Mossgiel ; but composing in the city itself nothing very specially remarkable in point either of quantity or quality, except the "Epistle to the Guidwife of Wauchope House," commencing, "I mind it weel in early date," and perhaps the "Address to the Haggis." His industry as a poet recommenced on his settlement at Ellisland. He again met the Muses on hillside and by stream. His hopes were bright, his inspiration and faculty were unimpaired. It was no very fortunate day that brought him his Excise commission, and it was undeniably an evil day when he resolved to break connection with rural life, and carried himself and his household gods to the town. He lived a little over three years in Dumfries ; the best of his poetical work in the period was still done in the course of a walk or a ride in the country ; what he did actually compose in the burgh itself, in his house in the Wee Vennel or the Mill Vennel, was of no remarkable merit for Burns—the Burns that had been!—excepting always the immortal manifesto of the superiority of manhood (we must not call it a poem ; both its author and Matthew Arnold have forbidden it!)—"A Man's a Man for a' That."

The question is inevitable—Could nothing have been done to save Burns and the fountain of poetry that was in him ? Neither town life nor the gauging of ale firkins was for him. Neither of them was fitted for the conservation or development of his rare

poetical faculty. On the contrary, they dimmed his vision and choked his utterance. Carlyle argues that an office in the Excise was the best thing for him, because upon that his heart was set. It was rather his despair that was set upon it. This is what his heart was set upon : " The appellation of a Scottish bard is by far my highest pride ; to continue to deserve it my most exalted ambition. Scottish scenes and Scottish story are the themes I could wish to sing. I have no dearer aim than to have it in my power, unplagued with the routine of business, for which Heaven knows I am unfit enough, to make leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia ; to sit on the fields of her battles ; to wander on the romantic banks of her rivers ; and to muse by the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honoured abodes of her heroes." The wish was expressed in these terms in '1787, and was substantially repeated in other forms. It implied an offer, but the nation was too blind to see it, or too callous to heed it. Surely the creation of a Scottish Laureateship would have been an act honourable to the nation. Burns was proud, but the acceptance of such an office would have compromised in no degree either his dignity or his freedom.

BURNS'S SCHOOL READING-BOOK.

IN the August of his twenty-ninth year Burns sat down one day in Mauchline to write an account of his education and early life, in a letter which is at once his longest, and most interesting, and in respect of its composition the best specimen of his prose that we have. The letter was addressed to Dr John Moore, the poet's senior by thirty years, and then famous as the author of *Zeluco*, published in 1786, better known now as the father of the hero of Corunna. In the course of the letter reference was made to an English school-book which the young schoolmaster, John Murdoch, had apparently introduced from Ayr into the little seminary over which he presided at Alloway. The book was popularly known as *Mason's Collection*. A great interest of no ordinary significance attaches to this book, for it was in its pages that the boy Robert Burns first felt the charm of literary expression. It would be wrong to say that the book made him a poet, for the poet is born and not made, but its influence in developing and directing his early poetical faculty was, by his own avowal, of the utmost importance. "The earliest composition that I recollect taking pleasure in was 'The Vision of Mizra,' and a hymn of Addison's beginning 'How are thy servants

blest, O Lord !' I particularly remember one half-stanza which was music to my boyish ear—

' For though in dreadful whirls we hung
High on the broken wave.'

I met with these pieces in *Mason's English Collection*, one of my school-books." This declaration of indebtedness to Addison, and to him through Mason, is familiar to every student of the history of Burns, and many must have felt on reading it at least a passing curiosity to know something more about that long-since forgotten school-book, *Mason's Collection*. A copy of it has recently come into the possession of the writer of these lines, and now lies before him. It purports to be the tenth edition, "with valuable additions;" and, as the date on the title-page is given as 1786, it is probable that the "valuable additions" were made subsequently to the period when Burns was a boy at school. There is, at least, no doubt that it is substantially the book that young Robbie Burness hugged, and dog-eared, and cried over till he became, at "ten or eleven years of age," a proficient, nay "a critic, in substantives, verbs, and participles." "Though it cost the schoolmaster some thrashings," he wrote (in rather ambiguous English, it must be owned), "I made an excellent English scholar." The turn of that expression about thrashing presumably alludes to the combined conscientiousness and clemency of young Murdoch. It seems to imply that he would by all means do his duty by his pupil, but that it would grieve him to be obliged to have recourse to the ultimate persuasion of

leather. But to return from tawse to text-book, the first thing one notices, on the back of the binding, is a correction of Burns's designation of the collection, for it is Masson's and not Mason's. The full title on the first page is as follows:—"A Collection of English Prose and Verse for the Use of Schools. By Arthur Masson, M.A., late Teacher of Languages in Edinburgh and Aberdeen." The same page gives the information that the book is "printed for, and sold by, all the booksellers in Scotland." A curiosity of the collection is its dedication to "The Most Noble Douglas, Duke of Hamilton," whose titles, to the number of sixteen, followed—as Cowley puts it—by "a long etcetera," occupy a whole page. Then comes an advertisement warning the public against spurious editions, and other collections sold as Masson's, from which one may infer the widespread reputation of the book. The book itself is a substantial octavo of 340 pages, got up very much in the style of a volume of the old *Spectator*. It is supremely didactic, and invariably "proper" from beginning to end; there is not a single sparkle of wit or gleam of humour from its first to its 340th page—unless one excepts the elephantine fun of "The Horn-Book, by a gentleman in his old age." It is heavy with solid instruction and moral advice, and dim with the gloom of a sombrous religion. Its prose passages include such fables as Virtue and Vice, such stories as Unnion and Valentine, such tales as Anningait and Ajut, and Inkle and Yarico; such histories as the Twelve Cæsars, the Marian Persecutions, and an Abridgement of the Bible; such essays

as Hints on Education, a Rhapsody on Art, and Meditations on Happiness. There are, besides, extracts from Robertson and Hume, translations from Demosthenes, the Bedlam scene from "The Man of Feeling," and a series of six "moral and entertaining" letters from the pen of the once famous Mrs Rowe. The poetical pieces fill rather more than 100 pages, and are crammed together in the first half of the book, the process of cramming having seized the compiler at page 62. They commence with a set of hymns, of which one hears little or nothing nowadays, drifting into Scriptural paraphrases, and passing, by the bridge of Pope's Messiah, into Parnell's Hermit, with its strange exposition of the divine government of human affairs. Addison, Mallet, Dryden, Thomson, Akenside, Shenstone, and Home are then laid under contribution. Even Somerville is drawn upon—Goldsmith, by some inscrutable "influence malign," is unrepresented; and with a few scenes from *Paradise Lost*, a touch of Shakespeare's tragic quality as revealed in *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, and the inevitable elegy written in the Buckinghamshire churchyard, the collection may be said to be before the reader. The Vision of Mirza, upon which the fancy of young Burns fixed at once, is undoubtedly the best bit of prose literature in the volume; and if there are better specimens of poetry in the collection than the hymn beginning "How are thy servants blessed," it is at least the best specimen of Addison's poetical talent, and so far approves the critical taste of the young scholar. Upon the whole, the book is a compilation which is fairly illustrative of the style

and influence of last century's literature ; it has the pompous conventionalisms, the ponderosity and prosiness, the buckram morality and copy-line maxims of worldly prudence, which mark so much of the literary produce of the eighteenth century.

It goes without saying that a popular common school-book, such as Arthur Masson's collection, has necessarily a great and extensive influence upon the minds of youth. Their feelings being fresh, are susceptible, and their taste is easily moulded. No after-reading or discriminative study can quite divorce their minds from the favourite authors of their boyhood. The poetry or the prose narrative which they liked to read when young remains up to manhood and on to old age the cherished guest of their memory. And to very many of the labouring classes, more especially of our rural population, the English reading-book of their boyhood, the book they thumbed at the parish school, is the only standard of literary taste, and, it may be, the only source of literary knowledge. How many of the present adult generation derived the groundwork of their literary knowledge, and perhaps their sole acquaintance with literature, from the once popular *M'Culloch's Course of Reading* or *Series of Lessons* ? You will hear them lament the banishment of those old favourites from the modern public school. Nothing that has superseded them, they declare, is at all their equal. Whatever Burns's opinion, when he had attained to manhood, may have been of *Mason's Collection*, this much at least is certain, that the book awoke his poetical instincts, and continued to influence his literary taste probably

to the end of his career. How otherwise are we to account for his life-long infirmity of affection for Shenstone? And where else did he borrow the stiffness of his prose epistolary style? Here, probably, he found the inspiration, if not the material, for his "Lament of Mary Stuart." Here he found part of that wealth of historical simile which runs riot in his Letter to Arnot of Dalquatswood, written in April 1786: it was in the *History of the Twelve Cæsars* he read about "Pompey at Pharsalia." Here, as already shown, he first read "The Vision of Mirza," and drew from the perusal an impression which remained to influence his habits throughout his life. Writing to Mrs Dunlop, from Ellisland, on New Year's Day morning 1789, he says:—"This day; the first Sunday of May; a breezy blue-sky'd noon, some time about the beginning, and a hoary morning, and calm, sunny day, about the end of autumn—these, time out of mind, have been with me a kind of holiday. I believe I owe this to that glorious paper in the *Spectator*, 'The Vision of Mirza'—a piece that struck my young fancy before I was capable of fixing an idea to a word of three syllables." It was here he found, in a passage from Thomson's too-much-neglected "Summer," that idea of a virtuous populace standing as "a wall of fire around their much-loved isle," which occurs in the penultimate stanza of "The Cottar's Saturday Night." Thomson's prayer is—

"Send forth the saving *virtues* round the land
In bright patrol!"

Here he may have first made acquaintance with the

name "Hornbook;" it is unlikely that he ever saw the article so designated. And here, in the hymns, will be found an occasional line or half-stanza, the echo of which can be started in that group of lugubrious poems with which Burns may be said to have commenced his career as poet, and of which "Winter—A Dirge" is a characteristic specimen.

BURNS AND GOLDSMITH.

THE generosity of his criticism is a feature of the correspondence of Burns scarcely less marked than it is amiable. He has many references to his brethren of the pen, and there is hardly a harsh word said of any one of them. On some point or other he has a high regard for them all. To contemporary versifiers he was particularly indulgent. A poem by Helen Maria Williams on the Slave Trade was "excellent"; he read it "with the highest pleasure." "Fully equal to 'The Seasons,'" was his verdict on James Crie's "Address to Loch Lomond." Even John Armstrong's very juvenile poetry was to his liking; while that obscure author's prose was "quite astonishing" in no ironical sense. Now, it cannot be denied that the work of those writers was at best literary commonplace, if it was not downright trash. Yet there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Burns' estimate. He probably imported into pages, originally dead or dull, the fire which so warmed his admiration. The fine glow of imagination which seemed to light up those lifeless pages was the reflection of his own eyes as he read.

Scarcely less generous was Burns's commendation of

authors of approved merit. To a great deal of the incense he offers them they are justly entitled; his generosity shows itself in his invariable avoidance of a classification of them according to their respective values. Comparisons were odious. Each in his kind was good, and Burns shrank from arranging them in degrees of relative worth. His criticisms, in short, proceeded from his heart, which was sympathetic to sensitiveness, rather than from his head, which, though capable of keen discrimination, was habitually subordinated to his affections.

In his affections Goldsmith had a chief place. But so, it might be said, had Young and Shenstone, Beattie and Barbauld, Pope and Addison, Fergusson and Ramsay. They were all favourites, and each at the moment seemed, from the warmth of his appreciation, to be *the* favourite. It is indeed impossible to say, if one were to judge merely from the evidence of explicit remark, which of those authors really held the highest place in his estimation. Probably he never allowed his understanding to decide. But if one may be allowed to infer Burns's partiality for one author over another by noting what correspondence of sentiment and expression exists between his own literary work and that of his favourites, a good case can be made out to the credit of Goldsmith. It is unnecessary here to insist that Burns knew and had been a close and appreciative student of the character and art of the Irish poet. He was, for that part, equally well read in at least a score of authors of repute of the eighteenth century. The time is gone by for regarding Burns as the illiterate and isolated

prodigy, who, "without models or with models only of the meanest sort," attained by sheer force of native genius to a foremost place in literature—as Carlyle, flattering the vulgar opinion (the reader may remember how picturesquely), represented him to be. Neither do the direct references to Goldsmith in the letters of Burns, nor the quotations from the "Deserted Village," and "The Traveller," whether incorporated with a set of verses, or prefixed as a motto to a popular poem, need to be taken into account for the present purpose. It is to those acknowledged passages in the poetry of Burns, which in respect of thought or feeling or style of expression betray a recollection of Goldsmith, that attention is now invited. The subject is one that hitherto has received little notice. And perhaps the last remaining task of the critic of Burns, who has been so exclusively busy with the morals of his subject, is to trace the nature and extent of Burns's relations as a poet with the poets and thinkers of his country, of whose works he was a confessed student and admirer. Such an examination cannot fail to prove fruitful of important results. It will show that Burns directly shared in the literary inheritance of his country to an extent far greater than is commonly believed. It will furnish the means of indicating his indebtedness to his predecessors. It will reveal the methods by which he assimilated to his own legitimate uses what they had grown and garnered for the common good. It will tend to prove that, great as was Burns's gift of original thought, his gift of original expression was greater; that, while his common sense was quick to see the naked truth when truth was

presented in whatever guise or disguise, it was his feelings that grasped and appropriated the idea like a discovery, and that found for its utterance to the world again that force and graphic felicity of language in virtue of which it became his own. It will, in short, demonstrate that Burns was no vulgar prodigy or phenomenon, but a natural historical development, drawing nourishment and inspiration from both English and Scottish literary sources, and more copiously from the former than from the latter.

To come back to Goldsmith, to whose influence on Burns this article is confined, the men had many feelings in common. Both were endowed by nature with unusual tenderness and sensitiveness of heart, and both had intimate sympathetic knowledge from their boyhood of humble peasant life. Before the sunshine of Burns, Goldsmith flung a radiance as of moonlight on the huts of poor men. He, too, though in a plaintive strain, very different from the robust and even uproarious passion of Burns, sang the simple pleasures of the lowly train. He had no liking for "the long pomp" and "the midnight masquerade;" his heart "distrusting asked if that was joy." "To me" he says—

"To me more dear, congenial to my heart
One native charm than all the gloss of art."

Burns was of the same express opinion—

"There's sic parade, sic pomp and art,
The joy can scarcely reach the heart."—*The Two Dogs.*

Sympathy with the peasant to both Burns and Goldsmith implied, of course, hatred of the local tyrant of

the fields. Goldsmith recurs to the tyranny again and again—

“The man of wealth and pride
Takes up a space that many poor supplied,
Space for his lake, his park’s extended bounds . . .
His seat
Indignant spurns the cottage from the green.”

He had a vision of the village made desert. He saw

“Opulence, her grandeur to maintain,
Lead stern depopulation in her train,
And over fields where scattered hamlets rose
In barren solitary pomp repose.”

With genuine regret he viewed

“Trade’s unfeeling train
Usurp the land and dispossess the swain ;
Along the lawn, where scattered hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose.”

Burns looked upon those scattered hamlets with the same loving eye as Goldsmith ; he, too, had the same mournful tale to tell—

“How pampered luxury
Looks o’er proud property extended wide,
And eyes the simple rustic hind
A creature of another kind.”—*A Winter’s Night.*

They had the same passion for liberty, symbolised in both as a transitory flower—“fair freedom’s blossoms” in the one, “fair freedom’s blooms” in the other. The instinct for personal freedom in Goldsmith carried him from all domestic restraints into actual vagabondage. He wandered for a solid year over the face of Southern Europe with the careless gaiety of a born vagrant. One wonders if the Contarini blood in his veins determined in any degree the direction and

limit of his wanderings. It was his fortune, he said, "to traverse realms alone, and find no spot of all the world my own." And yet he presently exclaims, kindling at Creation's charms of lake and field and forest combining round him—

"For me those tributary stores combine,
Creation's heir, the world, the world is mine!"

Burns, too, after his disruption from Mauchline, became an unsettled rover, though not quite a vagrant; and the idea that want and an early old age (the lot of his class) would one day reduce him to the lowest rung of life's ladder, the condition of mendicancy, was long familiar to his imagination; and even in the heyday of health and strength he had schooled his pride to the acceptance of it. The last o't, and warst o't, was only—just to beg. He was so accustomed to the prospect, the view of it gave him little concern. He consoled himself by a humorous anticipation of the fine daunderings by burn banks and hillsides, such as Edie Ochiltree so greatly extolled. And, as Sir Walter Scott says, alluding to this very subject, "he with a true poetical spirit found something to counterbalance the hardships and uncertainty of a mendicant's life in the free enjoyment of the beauties of Nature." Burns therefore sang, like Goldsmith:—

"What tho', like commoners of air,
We wander out we know not where,
But either house or hall?
Yet Nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
Are free alike to all."—*Epistle*.

Again, both were convinced by poverty and a natural habit of philosophical reflection that the source of happiness is not in education, or rank, or riches, which are at best but the favouring conditions of its growth. It is entirely dependent upon no form of political government, and by no means peculiar to any advantage of social position. Says Goldsmith :—

“Still to ourselves in every place consign’d,
Our own felicity we make or find.”

The search for this felicity outside ourselves is vain ; it is “a bliss which centres only in the mind.” Burns is not more convinced in his mind than Goldsmith of the truth of this doctrine, but he is more pronounced in his opinion. “The heart’s aye the part aye,” he sings, “that makes us richt or wrang ;” and

“If happiness have not her seat
And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest.”—*Epistle*.

As a result of this conviction, both poets necessarily set small store by rank and riches. The highest worth in their estimation is manliness, the highest rank manhood. Their motto is formulated by Burns in the well-known lines :—

“The honest, friendly, social man,
Whoe’er he be,
’Tis he fulfils great Nature’s plan,
And none but he.”—*Epistle*.

And so Goldsmith is indifferent to the loss and gain of titles :—

“Princes and lords may flourish or may fade ;
A breath can make them as a breath has made.”

While Burns repeats the same cry :—

“ Princes and lords are but the breath of Kings.”
—*Cottar's Saturday Night*.

“ A King can mak a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, an' a' that ;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
Gude faith, he manna fa' that ! ”—*Honest Poverty*.

A part of this creed of worth is a chivalrous, gentle, fraternal regard for woman ; more especially for those who, from their humility of birth, were deemed undeserving of the honourable notice of the knight-errant and his modern representative. Perhaps the most pathetic passage in the “ Deserted Village ” is that which describes the poor, houseless, shivering female, whose modest looks had once adorned her father's cottage. Burns is no less tender in his consideration of “ Sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth ” (“ Cottar's Saturday Night ”); and again returns to the subject, in words that at once recall Goldsmith's, in “ A Winter Night.”

Again, their devotion to poetry as an art is announced by both poets with the same fervour and in very similar language. Both debate the worldly wisdom of this devotion, with the same ultimate open-eyed choice of poetry and poverty, preferably to plenty and prose. It was in the following frank, devoted style that Goldsmith wooed the muse :—

“ Sweet Poesy ! thou loveliest maid !
Dear charming nymph ! . . .
My shame in crowds, my solitary pride,
Thou source of all my bliss and all my woe,
That found'st me poor at first and keep'st me so,” etc.

Burns admits us to a dramatic view of the manner of his decision. The scene is the smoky spence of his own humble farmhouse, and the time is a winter fore-night. He is alone, sad in mind and fatigued in body. He had been swinging the flail in the barn all day long, while his less necessitous farmer-neibors had been curling :—

“All in this mottie, misty clime,
I backward mused on wasted time,
How I had spent my youthfu’ prime
 An’ done nae thing,
But stringing blethers up in rhyme
 For fools to sing.

Had I to good advice but harkit
I might by this hae led a market,
Or strutted in a bank and clarkit
 My cash account ;
While here, half-mad, half-clad, half-sarkit,
 Is a’ th’ amount.

I started, mutt’ring ‘Blockhead ! coof !’
An’ heav’d on high my waukit loof
To swear by a’ yon starry roof,
 Or some rash aith,
That I henceforth would be rhyme-proof
 Till my last breath ;

When click ! the string the sneck did draw,
An’ jee the door gaed to the wa’ ;”

and Poesy herself, crowned with holly and looking supremely lovely, entered just in time to stop these reckless vows, which, the poet naively adds, would in any case have soon been broken. She consecrated

him for ever to her service, and crowned him with holly from her own brows :—

“ ‘Wear thou this !’ she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head ;
The polished leaves and berries red
Did rustling play,
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away.”

Notice may now be taken of a few instances in which Burns has recollected not so much the sentiment as the language of Goldsmith. “In all my wanderings,” begins Goldsmith,

“Round this world of care,
In all my griefs, and God has given my share,” etc.

Burns follows in a variation of stanza in the famous “Epistle to Davy” :—

“In a’ my share of care and grief,
Which Fate has largely given,
My hope, my comfort, and relief
Are thoughts of her and Heaven.”

Goldsmith has the line—

“Proud swells the tide with loads of freighted ore ;”

Burns has—

“Here Wealth still swells the golden tide,
And busy Trade his labour plies.”—*Address to Edina.*

Goldsmith has—

“Who quits a world where strong temptations try,
And since ’tis hard to combat, learns to fly.”

In “Sappho Rediviva” Burns has—

“In vain Religion meets my shrinking eye :
I dare not combat, but I turn and fly.”

The expression, "These degenerate times of shame," occurs in both—see "The Deserted Village" and "The Elegy on the Death of Dundas of Arniston."

"All the bloomy flush of life is fled,"

says Goldsmith; while Burns, in "The Lament for the Earl of Glencairn," writes—

"In weary being now I pine,
For all the life of life is dead."

Goldsmith, describing a scene on the Apennine slope, places "woods over woods in gay theatric pride;" Burns at Kenmore, in the Scottish Highlands, describes "the sweeping theatre of hanging woods." Perhaps it was from the Irish poet that Burns got the trick of interpolating "sure"—

"Sure those ills that wring my soul
Obey thy high behest."

He was certainly imitating, in the bard's song in "The Jolly Beggars," that peculiarity of Goldsmith's style which is brought in with such delightfully surprising effect in the two immortal elegies on "The Mad Dog," and on "The Glory of her Sex—Miss Blaize." These elegies are too well known to need quotation. Burns writes—

"He had no wish but—to be glad,
Nor want but—when he thirsted,
He hated nought but—to be sad," etc.

And there is probably an echo of Goldsmith's

"The king himself hath followed her—
When she has walked before,"

in the lines to Gavin Hamilton :—

“ And gar him follow to the kirk—
Aye when ye gang yoursel’.”

There is unmistakable similarity of style to “The Retaliation” of Goldsmith in Burns’s little-known sketch inscribed to Charles James Fox :—

“ Thou first of our orators, first of our wits,
Yet whose parts and acquirements seem just lucky hits,
With knowledge so vast, and with judgment so strong,
No man with the half of them e’er could go wrong ;
With passions so potent, and fancy so bright,
No man with the half of them e’er could go right,” etc.

And it may be noticed here, in conclusion, that Burns seems to have had in his eye Garrick’s clever additional portrait to “The Retaliation” when he wrote the Epistle to his later patron, Graham of Fintry :—

“ When Nature her great masterpiece design’d,
And fram’d her last best work, the human mind,
Her eye intent on all the mazy plan,
She form’d of various parts the various man,” etc.

With this, and what follows in the same poem, the reader may at his leisure compare Garrick’s lines on the “Making of Goldsmith,” which commence—

“ Here, Hermes, said Jove, who with nectar was mellow,
Go get me some clay, I will make an odd fellow.”

BURNS AND YOUNG.

OF English writers of lugubrious verse, probably the most long-winded was Edward Young. He seemed to luxuriate in woe. His "Complaint" runs to nine long "Nights," and the last is at least as long as any other two. Never was the mournful muse so severely exercised. There are over ten thousand verses in "Night Thoughts"; it would be too much to expect even from a goddess that she should have breath to inspire them all. It may be going too far to deny that Young was a poet in the ordinary sense of the word, but certainly his long "Complaint" does wear the look of a ponderously elaborate rhetorical composition. This question of poetry apart, it is the fact that "Night Thoughts" deals with themes of deepest interest, presents them in a way that arrests attention, and often at least suggests the poetical mood which it fails quite to express. The work was a perfect storehouse of phrases and reflections for the minor poets and preachers of last century. Even authors of superior intellect, and of a stronger and purer poetical faculty than his warmest admirer can allow to Young, were more or less indebted to "Night Thoughts." Traces of this indebtedness are to be found not only in "Beattie's wark" and the graceful art of Gold-

smith, but in some of the best passages of Cowper and Burns.

Young was an author of whom popularity was to be predicated in religious Scotland. His "sairiousness" and his sombreness were congenial to the national religious feeling. And nowhere was he more likely to be welcomed than among the descendants of the hill-men of the west country. Burns, even as a lad, was a thoughtful reader, and though it is not known precisely where or when, made early acquaintance with the thought of Young, and was profoundly and permanently affected by the acquaintanceship. Once, it is true, in a Bacchanalian mood, he makes a rebellious and rather disrespectful reference to the night-thinker :—

"Life's cares they are comforts—a maxim laid down
By the bard What-d'ye-call-him that wore the black gown :
And faith! I agree with th' old prig to a hair,
For a big-bellied bottle's the whole of my care."

No Churchman am I.

The maxim here quoted occurs in "Night the Second" of Young's "Complaint" :—

"Life's cares are comforts; such by Heaven design'd;
He that has none must make them, or be wretched."

But the sally was exceptional, and the current of Burns's deeper thought ran in harmony with that of Young. Many of Young's expressions as well as ideas remained in the memory of Burns, and some of them he quoted repeatedly. He writes to Clarinda: "I have been this morning taking a peep through—as Young finely says—'the dark postern of time long

elapsed.” The “fine saying” is from “Night the First.” Clarinda, by the way, seems to have liked quotations, and Sylvander did not spare her. They served the lover in a double purpose; he was frank enough to inform her that he liked to have quotations for every occasion—“they save one the trouble of finding expression adequate to one’s feelings!” It must be remembered, however, that she was an exacting correspondent, and required from him three letters per week for three consecutive months. Burns’s favourite expression from Young occurs near the beginning of “Night Thoughts”:—

“On reason build resolve,
That column of true majesty in man.”

Want of resolution was Burns’s principal want; hence probably his helpless admiration of the virtue. “Firmness,” he wrote to Peggy Chalmers, “is a character I would wish to be thought to possess. I have always despised the feeble resolve.” That he did feebly resolve, and that he despised himself for so doing, are the tragic facts of his life-drama; his worst loss at last was loss of self-respect. It was inevitable that Burns should put Young’s lines into a poem of his own, admiring their sentiment as he did so inordinately. We find them accordingly in a rhymed epistle to Dr Blacklock, but slightly paraphrased:—

“Come, firm Resolve, take thou the van,
Thou stalk of carl-hemp in man.”

None of the productions of Burns is more expressive of his political creed than “A Man’s a Man for a’ That.” It is commonly regarded as a sympathetic echo of one of the cries of the French Revolution.

The date of its composition is 1st January 1795. But it contains sentiments which, long before that date, were already familiar to the poet's mind in the language of Young. It not only reproduces those sentiments, but significant traces of that language as well. In the "Sixth Night" of his "Complaint" Young writes:—

" External homage and a supple knee
To beings pompously set up !
 . . . All more is Merit's due,
Her sacred and inviolable right,
Nor ever paid the monarch but the man,
Our hearts ne'er bow but to superior worth.
Each man makes his own stature. . . .
High worth is elevated place :
Makes more than monarchs, makes an honest man ;
Tho' no exchequer it commands, 'tis wealth :
And, though it wears no ribband, 'tis renown."

Compare with these quotations, which occur within the compass of some forty lines, the following bits from Burns, and it must be owned there is a parallel, and that Burns drew it with a singularly bold, firm, and free line:—

" The rank is but the guinea stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that.
The honest man, tho' e'er so poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.
Ye see yon birkie ca'd a lord,
Wha struts an' stares and a' that ?
Though hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof for a' that.
For a' that, and a' that,
His riband, star, and a' that ;
The pith o' sense an' pride o' worth
Are higher rank than a' that."

It is surely needless to say that these two sets of quotations, from Young and Burns respectively, while

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they constitute a parallel, stand in the relation of first draught and finished picture, and that the finished picture is the lyric of Burns.

In "Man was Made to Mourn," while there are undoubted traces of Shenstone's influence, there is probably also a suggestion of Young. "Man's inhumanity to man" is a notable line in the complaint of Burns. In the "Third Night" of Young's we have—

" Man hard of heart to man—
Man is to man the sorest, surest ill."

In the "Fifth Night"—

" Inhumanity is caught from man."

And in the "Ninth"—

" Turn the world's history ; what find we there?
Man's revenge
And inhumanities on man."

Again, in "Night the Eighth" Young employs the familiar image of ships at sea to illustrate the course of human life :—

" Some steer aright ; but the black blast blows hard,
And puffs them wide of hope ; with hearts of proof
Full against wind and tide some win their way,
And when strong effort has deserved the port
And tugg'd it into view, 'tis won—'tis lost ! "

There is at least a similarity, if an absolute connection cannot be proved, between these and the following lines of Burns :—

" Wi' wind an' tide fair i' your tail
Right on ye scud your sea-way," etc.
Address to the Unco Guid.

"A' your views may come to nought
When every nerve is strain'd."

Epistle to a Young Friend.

In the beautiful "Address to the Mountain Daisy" there is a well-known image of Young's:—

"For thee who mourn'st the daisy's fate,
That fate is thine, no distant date;
Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives elate
Full on thy bloom," etc.

In the Ninth Book of "The Complaint" one reads:—

"Final Ruin fiercely drives
Her ploughshare o'er creation."

Again, in "Winter—A Dirge" occurs the passage:—

"The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast,
The joyless winter day,
Let others fear, to me more dear
Than all the pride of May."

The first line here is an acknowledged quotation from "Dr Young" in all editions of Burns. But it is rather a recollection of a stanza of Young's exhausting and exhaustless "Ocean—an Ode":—

"The northern blast,
The shatter'd mast,
The syrt,* the whirlpool, and the rock,
The breaking spout,
The stars gone out,
The boiling strait, the monster's shock,
Let others fear,
To Britain dear;
Whate'er promotes her daring claim," etc.

The following lines of Burns have been the subject

* Sandbed.

of much comment, especially by clerical critics and censors of the poet in Scotland :—

“Thou hast formèd me
With passions wild and strong,
And listening to their witching voice
Has often led me wrong.”—*A Prayer.*

“I saw thy pulse’s maddening play
Wild send thee Pleasure’s devious way,
Misled by Fancy’s meteor ray
By passion driven ;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from Heaven.”

Coila in the Vision, Duan II.

It may interest some of these critics to know that Burns had clerical authority for his daring apology ; in the seventh book of his “Night Thoughts” the Rev. Dr Young holds forth in the following strain :—

“What though our passions are run mad, and stoop
With low, terrestrial appetite to graze
On trash, on toys, dethroned from high desire?
Yet still, through their disgrace, no feeble ray
Of greatness shines, and tells us whence they fell.”

A few phrases common to both Burns and Young may now be noted. “By passion driven,” already quoted in Burns’s “Prayer,” occurs in Young’s “Eighth Night” of “The Complaint ;” “inwoven in our frame,” in the “Seventh Night,” appears in “Man was made to Mourn ;” “pacing the round of life” will be found in the “Third Night” and in “The Cottar’s Saturday Night ;” the expression “honest poverty,” popularised by Burns, occurs in Young’s “Eighth Night.” Burns has—

“Stringing blethers up in rhyme
For fools to sing ;”

Young in his "Second Night" has—

"Thoughts disentangle passing o'er the lip,
Clean runs the thread ; if not, 'tis thrown away,
Or kept to tie up nonsense for a song."

Burns has—

" 'God save the King' 's a cuckoo sang
That's unco easy said aye : "

Young has—

"The cuckoo seasons sing
The same dull note."—*Book Third.*

And in the same "Third Book" Young has the lines :—

"Death is the crown of life ;
Were death denied poor man would live in vain."

They suggest "The Lazy Mist" of Burns :—

"Life is not worth having with all it can give ;
For something beyond it poor man sure must live."

We have probably a recollection of Young's line in "Night the Fifth"—"Death loves a shining mark, a signal blow"—in Burns's "Song of Death" :—

"Thou strik'st the young hero—a glorious mark !
He falls in the blaze of his fame."

For such single words as "tenebrific" (or "tenebrious"), "terræ-filial," "conglome," etc., Burns's best excuse is that they were employed, if not coined, by Young. The learned Doctor's coinage was commonly pedantic ; a few of them may be presented for curiosity's sake—they are taken at random : "Ichor of Bacchus" (this is wine), "antemundane father," "extramundane head," "irrefragable smile," "con-

certion of design," "a brow solute," "grand-climacterical absurdities," etc. Burns picked up a few, but after all he was remarkably modest with such a wealth of novelties before him. It is very probable that Burns got his classical nomenclature—his Cynthias and Castalias—rather from Young's and Shenstone's verse than from the Rector of Ayr Academy. Brief as this paper is, it is sufficient to show that Burns knew his Young.

BURNS AND SHENSTONE.

WE have it on the authority of Wordsworth that "poets in their youth begin in gladness, but thereof comes in the end despondency or madness." When Wordsworth thus formulated the result of his reflections on the poetic life, Burns was one of the poets of whom he had been particularly thinking. But while it is true that something very like despondency and madness beclouded the life of Burns at its close, it is unhappily not quite so clear that his career as a poet commenced in gladness. No doubt he rejoiced with a keen delight in the exercise of his rare poetical faculty; he has himself sung of "the rapture of the poet" at the moment when "fancy lightens in his e'e;" but the delight was hardly at the first, as an examination of his earlier efforts in the craft of verse-making sufficiently reveals. In these we find a significant proportion of melancholy moods, for which the misery and monotony of his circumstances are usually made to account. Of the first twenty-five of his recorded pieces, the larger half are full of a genuine sadness which sorts ill with one's conceptions of a youth-time of gladness and hope. They are elegies on the inequalities of fortune, the frailty of life, and the sinfulness of human nature. His twenty-third year seems to have

been a period of exceptional gloom. The poetical fruit of that year, some six or eight pieces in all, has a strong tang of Calvinism. Even of the poems of his apprenticeship that are not fairly to be described as gloomy, not a few have the ring of a bravely-assumed but hollow mirth. So that, taking his earlier poems altogether, one is not far wrong in saying that Burns's poetical career, which ended in gloom, began also in a gloom which did not readily give way. To most people an adequate explanation of this gloom is to be found in the poet's circumstances. Burns himself had a somewhat different explanation. True, he characterised the condition of his early life, in a well-known retrospective letter, as "the cheerless gloom of the hermit with the unceasing moil of a galley slave;" but he knew that such a life did not determine his brother Gilbert, for example, to the melancholy views which he himself entertained. He believed, and he seems to have cherished the belief, that he was the victim of a constitutional melancholy; and he appears to have found at last some consolation in knowing that it was common to the poetic temperament, if indeed it was not an essential part of it.

His natural predisposition to melancholy, which the "*angustæ res domi*" must have at least tended to foster, had an important influence upon the reading and thought of young Burns from the very first. Here it is necessary to discriminate between the kind of reading to which he was directed by the advice and example of his father and that to which, when the years of his pupilage was over, he turned of his

own freewill and choice. His father's bent was to divinity, moral philosophy, and the exact sciences, and these were subjects of evening study more or less systematic in the farmhouse of Mount Oliphant, as well as of frequent discussion out of doors at intervals of leisure in the work of the field. The text-books, so to say, for those studies were Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*, Taylor's *Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin*, and Euclid's *Elements*. They were read and pondered by the future poet chiefly because they were recommended by his father. But when he was free to follow the bent of his own mind and to choose his own reading—a freedom which he entered upon somewhere about his sixteenth year—he turned instinctively to poetry, and particularly to that kind of it which expresses religious or philosophical reflections in elegiac strains. William Shenstone was an early favourite; Blair, Gray, and Young were also soon discovered; and they remained, it may almost be said, lifelong friends. It is scarcely inaccurate to describe these authors as writers of elegy; two of them employed the recognised elegiac measure; and though Blair and Young expressed their mournful reflections in blank verse, they may be regarded as essentially elegiac poets. They were, at or near the outset of his poetical career, Burns's favourite authors. There is evidence, both plain and implied, that he studied them deeply and sympathetically. They inspired no inconsiderable amount of his thought; and, while they were not seldom suggestive of new trains of thought and feeling, they were occasionally contributory of poetical phrases

and poetical situations to the verse of Burns. It is the purpose of the present paper to notice Burns' more important references to Shenstone, and to point out the nature and extent of his indebtedness to that once famous and now, perhaps, too neglected English poet.

It was in the village of Kirkoswald, whither he had been sent in his seventeenth year to learn land surveying, that Burns first made acquaintance with Shenstone's poems. "They were," he announced, "an important addition to his reading." Eight years afterwards Shenstone was still first on the list of his favourite authors. Writing from Lochlee, in January 1783, to his schoolmaster, Mr John Murdoch, then settled in London, he declares: "My favourite authors are of the sentimental kind, such as Shenstone, particularly his *Elegies*." Three years later his opinion of the merits of Shenstone was still high—so high that in his interesting preface to the Kilmarnock edition of his poems he makes direct mention of him as "that celebrated poet whose divine *Elegies* do honour to our language, our nation, and our species." Even after his arrival in Edinburgh, at a time when he was patronised by "The Lounger," and lionised by the first literary society of his country, he wrote with a strange modesty that he was not vain enough to hope for distinguished poetic fame in a language "where Shenstone and Gray had drawn the tear." And later on, in his charming letters to Peggy Chalmers and Mrs Dunlop, we come across now a quotation from Shenstone's prose, and now an admiring reference to his poetical genius.

Burns's opinion of Shenstone was his own, and his admiration, so frequently and so warmly expressed, was undoubtedly genuine. At the same time, he was by no means ignorant of the high place which contemporary criticism assigned to Shenstone, nor of the particular qualities for which that poet was praised. Beattie was well known to Burns, and Beattie, in his attack upon Churchill in 1765, had represented "all the Loves and gentler Graces" as mourning over Shenstone's "recent urn." It would be easy to show that Burns's individual opinion of Shenstone was strengthened by his knowledge of Beattie's criticism, and that the language of Beattie was lingering in his memory when, as in the fine passage in "The Vision," he described the art of Shenstone in the grace of its pathetic touch as utterly beyond the range of his own genius:—

"Thou canst not learn, nor can I show
To paint with Thomson's landscape glow,
Or wake the bosom-melting throe
 With Shenstone's art,
Or pour with Gray the moving flow
 Warm on the heart."

It is worth while comparing with this the following lines of Beattie—upon which, it may be noticed in passing, a powerful passage* in Coleridge's "Monody on the Death of Chatterton" is modelled:—

"Is this the land where Gray's unlabour'd art
Soothes, melts, alarms, and ravishes the heart?"

* "Is this the land of song-ennobled line?
Is this the land where genius ne'er in vain
 Poured forth his lofty strain?
Ah me! yet Spenser, gentlest bard divine,
Beneath chill Disappointment's shade,' etc.

While the lone wanderer's sweet complainings flow
In simple majesty of manly woe.

Is this the land, o'er Shenstone's recent urn
Where all the Loves and gentler Graces mourn?" etc.

The closeness of Burns's study of Shenstone, and the nature and extent of his obligations to him, will be best shown by a citation or comparison of parallel passages taken from both authors. Take first the poetical situation and scenery represented in "Man was Made to Mourn." It is an evening of chill November, and the poet wanders forth along the banks of Ayr. He meets an old man with hoary hair, who thus addresses him :—

" Young stranger, whither wandrest thou ?
Does thirst of wealth thy step constrain ?" etc.

In the background of this scene are "moors extending wide." Turn, now, to the seventh of Shenstone's series of Elegies. It is a stormy evening of autumn, and the poet strays by Orwell's winding banks. He meets a venerable figure with white locks, who thus accosts him :—

" Stranger, amidst this pealing rain,
Benighted, lonesome, whither wouldst thou stray ?
Does wealth or power thy weary step constrain ?" etc.

In the background of this scene are "distant heaths." Here, it will be observed, the situation is very similar, while the language quoted is almost identical.

In another passage of "Man was Made to Mourn" occur the lines—

" Look not alone on youthful prime
Or manhood's active might."

The latter has been obviously adopted, consciously or more probably unconsciously, from Shenstone's Eleventh Elegy—

“Not all the force of manhood's active might,” etc.

A recollection of this same Eleventh Elegy, mingling in the poet's memory with echoes of Gray's Ode on Eton, will be found in the last stanza of Burns's Ode on Despondency. “O enviable early days!” says Burns, recalling the period of childhood :—

“Ye tiny elves, that guiltless sport
Like linnets in the bush,
Ye little know the ills ye court
When manhood is your wish.”

The lines were penned in 1786; and there is a peculiar pathos in this young man of twenty-seven warning the young from his own experience of the tears and fears of dim-declining age. Shenstone, however, had already written :—

“O youth ! enchanting stage, profusely blest !
Then glows the breast, as opening roses fair,
More free, more vivid than the linnet's wing,” etc.

It is unnecessary to give the full quotation, but the moralising is in the same strain precisely.

Again, most readers of Burns are familiar with the rather strange expression “dear idea,” which occurs not less than thrice in various parts of his poetry—in the Epistle to Davie, “Her dear idea brings relief and solace to my breast”; in his early lyrical fragment on Jean, “Her dear idea round my heart should tenderly entwine”; and in “Sappho Rediviva,” “Your dear idea reigns.” The expression occurs in Shenstone,

but it would be hazardous to say that it was absolutely original and his own creation. In his Ninth Elegy one may read—"Restore thy dear idea to my breast."

Again, the opening lines of Burns's "Sonnet on hearing a thrush sing in January" seem to have completely caught the echo of a couplet in the Sixth Elegy of Shenstone. The sonnet begins—

"Sing on, sweet thrush, upon the leafless bough,
Sing on, sweet bird, I listen to thy strain."

The couplet of the elegy expresses the same sense in similar words—

"Sing on, my bird, the liquid notes prolong :
Sing on, my bird, 'tis Damon hears the song."

If we turn to "The Cottar's Sunday Night," and read it alongside of "The Schoolmistress," we shall find that in respect of measure, theme, and style of both treatment and language, it was modelled scarcely less after the manner of Shenstone than according to the pattern of Fergusson's "Farmer's Ingle." Unlike the latter, but like "The Schoolmistress," it maintains the perfect form of the Spenserian stanza. It would take up too much space to indulge in quotations here, but the student of Burns may profitably compare the stanza of "The Cottar" which commences "They chant their artless notes in simple guise," and the two succeeding stanzas, with stanzas xii. and xiv. of "The Schoolmistress"—not for sentiment, but for style. He will scarcely fail to perceive a suggestive likeness. On the one hand, there is an enumeration of psalm tunes ; on the other, an enumeration of garden herbs. The enumeration in both cases proceeds on the same

lines. There is, further, in the dame's singing of Shenstone, a very possible suggestion of the cottar's reading of Burns. The passage

" Sweet melody ! to hear her then repeat
How Israel's sons beneath a foreign king," etc.

may have inspired

" The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
How Abram was the friend of God on high," etc.

And none will deny that the advice of the dame to her infant charge might have formed part of the "admonition due" of the cottar-father to the "yunkers" of his family :—

" And warned them not the fretful to deride,
But love each other dear, whatever them betide."

That such advice was given is indeed implied, for

" With joy unfeigned brothers and sisters meet,
And each for other's welfare kindly spiers."

The mysterious elegy, "the work of some hapless son of the Muses," which Burns presented in his own manuscript to Mrs Dunlop, should perhaps be noticed here, if only for his own estimate of it, as being in point of sentiment—"no discredit even to that elegant poet," though clothed in a language admittedly inferior to Shenstone's. If it be Burns's own work, which is on the whole very doubtful, one might be excused for regarding it as descriptive of his sorrow and solitude of soul at the grave of Highland Mary. The scene of the following verses may be imagined to be the West Churchyard at Greenock, where Mary

Campbell is believed to lie buried, and the time a sorrowful hour of unavailing regret immediately preceding his projected emigration to the West Indies :—

“ At the last limits of our isle,
Washed by the western wave,
Touched by thy fate, a thoughtful bard
Sits lonely by thy grave ;
Pensive he eyes before him spread
The deep, outstretching vast :
His mourning notes are borne away
Upon the rapid blast.”

BURNS AND BLAIR;

WITH A NOTE ON BEATTIE.

THE name of Robert Blair is associated in English literary history with a gloomy and powerful poem "The Grave," which had an immense popularity, especially in Scotland, all through the latter half of last century. It was hardly eclipsed even by Young's "Night Thoughts"—if one may speak of gloom eclipsing gloom. Southey referred to it as the most meritorious of all poems written in imitation of the "Night Thoughts"; but Southey does injustice to the genius of Blair, for "The Grave" was composed before the publication of Young's gloomy masterpiece, though it was not printed till 1743. It was written before its author's appointment as minister to the parish of Athelstaneford, in Haddingtonshire, and when Blair was still a young man between twenty and thirty. A well-known line of Campbell's—"Like angels' visits, few and far between"—it may not be generally known, was lifted from Blair, who refers to good impulses returning in an evil life "in visits like those of angels, short and far between." But a greater than Campbell was indebted, and indebted to a greater extent, for both turn of phrase and general tenor of reflection, to the author of "The Grave."

Burns was a close and earnest student of this powerfully suggestive poem. Both his correspondence and his poems bear the clearest evidence, direct and indirect. The passage—

“ Tell us, ye dead ! will none of you in pity,
To those you left behind disclose the secret ?
Oh, that some courteous ghost would blab it out,
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be ? ”

must have been often on his lips, and was often transcribed by his pen. As well known to him, and as often quoted, was another passage from “The Grave” of some thirty lines commencing—

“ Friendship ! mysterious cement of the soul !
Sweetness of life, and solder of society !
I owe thee much ; thou hast deserved of me
Far, far beyond what I can ever pay.”

But the greatest honour that can be attributed to the passage lies in the undoubted fact that, along with a scarcely remembered lyric of Thomson's, it suggested much of the imagery and sentiment of Burns's unutterably rich and tender hymns on Highland Mary. Blair represents himself and his “friend” as “wandering heedless on” in the ample security of a thick wood ; the lovers rest on a flowery bank beside a stream that murmurs sweetly through the underwood ; the thrush in their hearing renews and “mends his song of love ;” the fragrance of wild rose and eglantine exhales around them—

“ O, then, the longest summer's day
Seemed too, too much in haste ; still the full heart
Had not imparted half.”

“To Mary in Heaven,” like the companion verses

on "Highland Mary," contains the same imagery of woodland and water, birds and flowers, the same situation of lovers fain, the same sentiments of affection, the same sad reflections afterwards to be noted. The lovers meet by the winding Ayr that gurgled and kissed its pebbly shore, half hidden in an underwood of birch and blooming thorn ;

"The flowers sprang wanton to be press'd,
The birds sang love on every spray :
Till too, too soon the glowing west
Proclaim'd the speed of wing'd day."

To both poets their memories are for ever sad and for ever sacred by reason of the death of the loved one. Blair's reflections are thus expressed—

"Dull Grave ! thou spoil'st the dance of youthful blood,
Strik'st out the dimple from the cheek of mirth,
And every feature from the face."

The beloved dead is "dumb as the green covering turf." Far more tenderly uttered is the sorrow of Burns—

"O pale, pale now those rosy lips
I aft hae kiss'd sae fondly,
And closed for aye the sparkling glance
That dwelt on me sae kindly. . . .
Now green's the sod's and cauld the clay
That wraps my Highland Mary."

At least one other bit from this fruitful passage in "The Grave" of Blair reappears in the familiar poetry of Burns. In the plaintive flow of "Banks and Braes o' Boonie Doon" the maiden all forlorn sings sadly—

"Thou minds me o' departed joys,
Departed never to return."

The expression may of course be a mere coincidence, but is more probably a recollection of the words of Blair—

“Of joys departed
Not to return, how painful the remembrance !”

Other traces of Burns's study of Blair are in all likelihood discoverable in the following parallel passages :—

“He whistled up Lord Lennox' march
To keep his courage cheery.”—*Hallowe'en*.

This is said of “fechtin' Jamie Fleck” when he boldly went forth into the darkness to sow his hempseed. Blair had already pictured the schoolboy as he passed “the lone churchyard”—

“Whistling aloud to bear his courage up.”

Again, in “The Petition of Bruar Water,” a noble poem framed on the lines of Ramsay's “Salutation of Edinburgh to the Marquis of Carnarvon,” Burns describes the harvest moon as making a moving check-work with the trembling twigs and leaves of “lofty firs, and ashes cool,” and “fragrant birks in woodbines drest” : he has a visionary glimpse of

“the reaper's nightly beam
Mild-chequering thro' the trees.”

The same peculiar expression occurs in Blair, of—

“Moonshine chequering thro' the trees.”

Everybody remembers the line, which prepares us for the revelry of Tam o' Shanter and Soutar Johnnie ; it is—

“When drouthie neibors neibors meet.”

Blair hints at a similar orgy, if the word may be

allowed, with a grave-digger for Thaliarch—only his expression is less euphemistic ; it is—

“When drunkards meet.”

It was to a different Blair—“damnation” Blair, as he has been irreverently called—that Burns was indebted for a notably felicitous alteration of his text—

“Moodie speeds the holy door
Wi’ tidings of *salvation*.”—*Holy Fair*.

In modern editions of the minor poets the verses of Beattie are usually bound up with those of Blair. Beattie figured so prominently in both prose and rhyme in the heyday of his reputation as rather to astonish us now. “The Minstrel” first appeared in 1771, and from that year till about 1775 its singularly fortunate author was one of the lions of his time, patronised on all hands, and encouraged to roar, by Royalty, the Church, and the literary profession. It was impossible that Burns should be ignorant of him, or fail to peruse him. But Beattie seems to have had little influence upon either the thought or the language of Burns. He was no doubt, though in a small degree, indebted to him—as already shown—for the criticism of Shenstone and Gray which occurs in “The Vision” :—

“Thou canst not learn nor can I show . . .
To wake the bosom-melting throe
With Shenstone’s art,
Or pour with Gray the moving flow
Warm on the heart.”

Beattie’s opinion of those poets will be found in a

somewhat bitter and uncharitable poem "on the report of a monument to be erected in Westminster Abbey in memory of a late author," which he had the good taste to reject from later editions of his poems. The author referred to was Churchill, satirised as Bufo. In the course of the satire he makes mention of "Gray's unlaboured art, soothing, melting and ravishing the heart ;" of the Elegy written in a Country Chnrchyard, "flowing in simple majesty of manly woe ;" and of the amiability and grace of Shenstone's character as a poet. If there is no trace of Beattie's influence in the lines quoted from "The Vision," there is no trace of it anywhere else in the work of Burns. There are, however, several references which go to show Burns's admiring acquaintanceship with his writings and his reputation. And, indeed, without their evidence, it is past doubt that Burns must have had no mean regard for one who could turn in his own favourite measure so graceful a stanza as—

"Oh, bonnie are the greensward howes,
Where thro' the birks the burnie rows,
And the bee bums, and the ox lows,
And saft winds rustle,
And shepherd lads on sunny knowes
Blaw the blith whistle."

The stanza is from a rhyming epistle to Ross of Lochee, the author of "The Fortunate Shepherdess"—a pastoral drama which has done for Scotland north of the Tay what Ramsay's "Gentle Shepherd" has done for the Lowlands ; and it is part of an effort, in the vernacular (of Aberdeen), which approves the

capability of Beattie to produce such a poem as that "On Pastoral Poetry" which one diffidently attributes to Burns.

Probably the most convincing proof of Burns's admiration for Beattie is expressed in his letter, of date January 1787, to "Zeluco" Moore—"In a language where Thomson and Beattie have painted the landscape . . . I am not vain enough to hope for distinguished poetic fame." Thomson's ability to paint the landscape will be universally allowed, but Beattie's will be questioned—because it is not so generally known. Which of his descriptions of natural scenery may have been in the mind of Burns when he elevated him to the level of Thomson, it is of course impossible to say definitely, but an examination of "The Minstrel" will reveal several impressive scenes informed with the graceful spirit which pervades the reposeful passages of Campbell's "Wyoming," and which may well have enraptured the responsive heart of Burns. The student who is curious in such matters will find favourable specimens of "Beattie's wark" in stanzas xxxviii. and xxxix. of the First Book, and stanza viii. of the Second Book of "The Minstrel." The last-mentioned stanza is distinctly echoed in the well-known "flamingo" stanza of "Gertrude of Wyoming." A better specimen of Beattie's descriptive art occurs in the opening passage of his once widely known, now clean forgotten, "Hermit." But perhaps he attains his highest pitch as a descriptive poet in an obscure poem, written in his twenty-fourth year; here we have

such picturesque touches, such suggestive melodies as—

“What time the wan moon’s yellow horn
Gleams on the western deep ;”

and—

“Be mine the hollow cliff, whose pine
Waves o’er the gloomy stream—
Whence the scared owl on pinions gray
Breaks from the rustling boughs,
And down the lone vale sails away
To more profound repose.”

In January 1787 Burns sent, by way of New Year’s gift, a copy of the Poems of Beattie to a certain Miss Logan, residing with her brother and mother at Park Villa, near Ayr. The brother, well known to us as “thairm-inspiring Willie,” from his accomplishments as a virtuoso on the violin, was a retired military officer holding the rank of major ; and the sister was “Sentimental Sister Susie” of the poet’s “Epistle to Major Logan.” The copy of Beattie was accompanied with the lines :—

“I send you more than India boasts
In Edwin’s simple tale,”

along with the sentiment—“and may, dear maid, each lover prove an Edwin still to you !”

Perhaps the only other reference to Beattie in the works of Burns are those of the delightfully frank “First Epistle to Lapraik”—

“Thought I, can this be Pope, or Steele,
Or Beattie’s wark ?”

and of “The Ordination” :—

“Common-sense is gaun, she says,
To mak to Jamie Beattie
Her plaint this day.”

The appositeness of the latter allusion is in the fact that Beattie's "Essay on Truth"—a blast impotently intended to sweep David Hume's philosophy behind the horizon—revealed him as one of the "Moderate" party in the clerical dissensions of the time. Sir Joshua had painted Beattie as a champion aiding an angel in strife with Scepticism, Folly, and Prejudice. His "Essay on Truth" brought him the compliment from Reynolds. But nowadays one only remembers the "Essay" because it explains the picture and illustrates the reference in Burns.

DUNBAR IN BURNS.

LITERARY Scots, it has been daringly said, is of no higher antiquity than "The Gentle Shepherd" of Allan Ramsay. The statement may safely be traversed. It is, indeed, no less absurd than to say that there is no Scottish literature of earlier date than the beginning of last century. For the fact is patent that William Dunbar's best poetry is expressed in a vigorous vernacular, and one of the most obvious features in the history of the Scottish language is the persistency with which for centuries that tongue has maintained its distinctive peculiarities of word and idiom. Quite three centuries lie between Burns and Dunbar, yet the earlier poet is not one whit less vernacular than the later, and the vernacular they severally employ is substantially one and the same. Every one knows that the language of Burns was the current dialect of the peasant Lowlander of his day, put to poetical uses, but it is not so generally recognised that it was also the almost perfect tradition of more than three centuries. Scottish words and phrases of remarkable expressiveness, which we now for the most part refer to Burns as if he were their grand first parent, were already current and mature both in the country and at the Court of James the Third, and are to be picked by scores from the pages of Dunbar. Open the book at random, and the sample comes readily—"attour,"

"wale," "haggis," "swats," "hurcheon," "hirpling," "branking," "aver" (*for* cart-horse), "swanky," "oxter," "hallan," "get" (*for* offspring), "roose" (*for* extol), "smoor," "widdie," "eldritch," "coft," "wauk," "swith," etc. Yet these words, and others like them, are mostly credited to the account of Burns. Scottish phrases and turns of expression common to both poets, and even more significant of the integrity of the language than single words, are no less plentiful. "Air and late," "scaith and scorn," "wae worth," "ill-willie," or "guid-willie," "hale an' fere," "I rede thee," "tak guid tent," "at kirk an' market," "to think lang" (*for* to weary), "drive ower" (*for* spend—said of time); and such terms as "true as ony steel," "shine like ony saip," etc.—these and other idioms are well known as occurring in the verse of Burns; but they may also be found in the verse of Dunbar, and probably in no single instance originated with him.

Such a comparison of language as is here rather suggested than instituted is not without interest, and might be made of value; of more popular interest, however, is the comparison of the genius of Burns with that of Dunbar in regard to their choice of subject. This it is proposed here briefly to point, not in the vague and general way, which would prove that hundreds of poets are very like each other because they all write upon the beauty of nature, and the rapture or wretchedness of love, and similar simple distractions; but by noting in Dunbar certain distinct and definite poems which directly or indirectly remind the critical reader of achievements by Burns on the same or very kindred themes. The comparison is not

meant to be exhaustive, yet it will probably surprise the reader to learn, if he does not already know, that in Dunbar may be found the anticipation—I do not say the suggestion—of such well-known poems or themes by Burns as the following:—"Epistle to a Young Friend," "Death and Dr Hornbook," "The Deil cam' Fiddling thro' the Toun," "Mary Morrison," "Macpherson's Farewell," "Auld Farmer's Salutation to his Auld Mare," "Address to Edinburgh," "Guid Morning to Your Majesty," "Green Grow the Rashes, O," "The Vision"—("Had I to Guid Advice but Harkit,") "A Winter Night," and certain pieces exemplifying that peculiar poetical somersault and recovery to which Burns has given the designation of *per contra*.

The anticipation of Burns's gnomic poem containing his advice to Andrew may be found in Dunbar's verses commencing "To dwell in Court, my friend." Each poet counsels his friend on the subjects of friendship, fortune, religion, etc. Only on the topic of love is the elder poet silent. "Aye free, aff-hand," says Burns—

"Aye free, aff-hand, your story tell
When wi' a bosom crony,
But still keep something to yoursel'
Ye scarcely tell to ony";

and Dunbar offers the same cautious advice:—

"Beware whom to thy counsel thou disco'er,
For truth dwells not aye for that truth appears;
Put not thy honour into aventure,
A friend may be thy foe as fortune steers."

Burns's advice on the subject of wealth is to wait assiduously upon Fortune—

"And gather gear by every wile
That's justified by honour."

Dunbar's view of fickle fortune being the same, he gives the same advice—

“With all thy heart treat business and cure.”

“Yet,” says Burns—

“They wha fa' in fortune's strife
Their fate we shouldna censure.”

And Dunbar counsels his friend to “be nowise despiteful to the puir.” Burns reflects that “a man may have an honest heart tho' poortith hourly stare him”; while Dunbar reminds his young friend to be patient though he possess no lairdship, “for hie virtue may stand in low estate.” On religion both poets give the same advice—to avoid profane company and reverence the Creator. Burns' language is well known—

“Ne'er with wits profane to range,
Be complaisance extended.”

And—

“A correspondence fixed with Heaven
Is sure a noble anchor.”

Dunbar's language carries the same counsel—

“Hold God thy friend, ever stable by Him stand,
He'll thee comfort in all misadventure.”

And—

“In company choose honourable feres,
But from vile folk withdraw thee far aside;
The Psalmist says *cum sancto sanctus eris*,
And he rules weel wha weel himself can guide.”

Burns's Dr Hornbook is notorious. But the keen eye of Dunbar also caught the character, and subjected it to the same style of handling. It is a satire with touches of grim humour on the arch-quack John Damian *alias* French John, *alias* John-the-Leech, etc. Beginning with a murder in Italy, this wholesale homicide qualified in France, and finally set up and secured a general practice in

Scotland. He was at once apothecary, physician, and surgeon. But he revelled in blood. His "garde-vyance" was crammed with irons and other "instruments for slaughter." "Where he let blude, it was nae lauchter." "He left neither sick nor sair unslain" in France ; and in Scotland

"His practiks never were put to preif
But sudden death, or great mischief!"

Dunbar's Deil, as he passed through the market, was not simply in search of an exciseman ; nor did he just confine his operations to taverners, maltmen, and brewsters, and those in any way connected with "the trade." Mahoun—so Dunbar calls him—took a wider sweep in the good old times. The clergy had the honour of first catching his eye ; but he made little if any distinction of crafts or professions. He called his followers from all classes—merchants, goldsmiths, tailors, and souters, baxters, blacksmiths, fleshers, and fish-wives, the last-mentioned all in a body.

"A tailor said—'In a' this toun
Be there a better weel-made gown,
I give me to the Fiend all free !'
'Gramercy, tailor !' said Mahoun,
'Renounce thy God, an' come to me !'"

The measure of "Mary Morrison" was known to Dunbar. The prevailing tone and the characteristic sentiment of Burns's poem will be found in Dunbar's Lines to a Lady, beginning "My heart's treasure, and sweet assured foe." Burns entreats for pity at least, and finds comfort in the reflection that

"A thocht ungentle canna be
The thocht o' Mary Morrison."

Dunbar, too, entreats for ruth, with the "tears falling from his face," and though less hopeful than Burns, is not hopeless—

"For how should ony gentle heart endure
To see this sicht in ony creature?"

Dunbar's Donald Owre, that "fell strong traitor," who "mair falset had than other fowre," was the Macpherson of his day. But Dunbar's "Epitaph for Donald," it must be owned, shows no glimpse of that admiration for the daring and dauntless freebooter which is more than suggested in Burns' "Macpherson's Farewell." The fault, however, was not Dunbar's, for the earlier freebooter, though, like the later, he lived a life of "sturt and strife" (the phrase occurs in Dunbar), and "died by treacherie," had not that redeeming touch of grace which Carlyle notes in Macpherson, and which probably recommended his character to the "strange half-barbarous, half-poetic fellow-feeling of Burns."

"Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,
Sae dauntingly gaed he ;
He played a spring, and danced it round,
Below the gallows-tree."

The reference is to the air which bears his name, said to have been composed by Macpherson the night before his execution—proof, as Carlyle remarks, of a fibre of poetry in his savage heart. "On the wings of that poor melody his better soul would soar away above oblivion, pain, and all the ignominy and despair which, like an avalanche, was hurling him to the abyss."

"The Petition of the Gray Horse" of Dunbar may

well stand beside Burns's record of the long and faithful service of the auld mare, grown

“dowie, stiff, and crazy,
And thy auld hide as white's a daisy.”

There is much of the same tender humour in both poems, heightened in the case of Dunbar's by self-identification with the Gray Horse. When the auld mare was a filly, we are told—

“She set weel down a shapely shank
As e'er tread yird,
And could hae flown out-owre a stank
Like ony bird.”

The Gray Horse, when a colt, was also “i' the foremost rank”—

“When I was young and into ply,
And would cast gambols to the sky,
I had been bocht in realms near-by,
Had I consentit to be sauld.”

In the end the happier lot was the auld mare's—

“Thinkna, my auld trusty servan',
That now perhaps thou's less deservin',
An' thy auld days may end in stervin' ;
For my last fow
A heapit stimpart—I'll reserve ane
Laid by for you.”

The Gray Horse, on the other hand, was left lamenting—

“I have run lang furth in the field,
On pastures that are plain and peel'd ;
I micht be now ta'en in for eild.
My mane is turnèd into white,
And thereof ye have a' the wyte :
When ither horse had bran to bite
I gat but girse,” etc.

Burns's Address to “Edina, Scotia's Darling Seat,”

is well known. Dunbar's Address to London, the "A *per se* of towns," is pitched in the same lofty strain of compliment and admiration, but his address to Edinburgh is far from complimentary :

" May nane pass thro' your principal gates
For stink of haddocks and of skates,
For cries of carlines and debates,
For 'fensive flytings of defame :
Think ye not shame,
Before strangers of all estates,
That sic dishonour hurt your name ?"

In his address to King George—"Guid Morning to your Majesty!"—Burns, it will be remembered, reminds the King that he is his humble debtor for "neither pension, post, nor place." Dunbar, too, besides sending Royalty his good wishes for a New Year, makes no less bold a declaration—

" Though that I, amang the lave,
Unworthy be a place to have,
Or in their number to be told—
As lang in mind my work shall hold
As ever ony of them a',
Supposin' my rewaird be sma' !"

Perhaps the most notable passage in "Green Grow the Rashes" is the last stanza—

" Auld Nature swears the lovely dears,
Her noblest wark she classes, O ;
Her 'prentice han' she tried on man,
And then she made the lasses, O."

Precisely the same sentiment is in Dunbar's panegyric poem addressed to Queen Margaret :—

" Of thy fair figure Nature might rejoice
That so thee carved with all her curious slight ;
She has thee made this very warld's choice,
Showing on thee her handicraft and might,
To see how fair she could depaint a wight."

In the first "Duan" of his "Vision," Burns for the moment regrets that he had surrendered his life to poesy; he backward mused on wasted time, found he had nothing to show for the past but a few foolish rhymes, and contrasted his present condition—"half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit"—with what might have been had he listened to gude advice. Dunbar was subject to similar fits of reminiscence and despondency:—

" In some part on myself I 'plain
When other folk flatter and feign ;
Alas ! I can but ballads breif—
Sic folly held my bridle reign :
Excess of thocht does me mischief."

Some points of resemblance will be found between Burns's "A Winter Night" and Dunbar's noble "Meditation in Winter": the situation is the same, and similar melancholy thoughts course through the minds of the sleepless poets. Burns's use of the *Per Contra* is illustrated in "Tam Samson's Elegy." Dunbar has brilliant examples of it in his poems on James Doig, and on the Souters and Tailors of Edinburgh.

Burns, it is safe to say, was unacquainted with the poetry of Dunbar, if we except those specimens of it which are included in Ramsay's "Evergreen." The similarity in several important relations between the two poets is the more remarkable, and well illustrates the consistency and continuity of our literary history.

THE END.

